Kearney

The British Isles

Second Edition

The British Isles

A History of Four Nations

Second edition

HUGH KEARNEY

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For my wife, Kate

In this Ocean there happen to be two very large islands which are called Britannic, Albion and Ierna, bigger than any we have mentioned.

Aristotle, *De Mundo* c.iv

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In the course of writing this book I came to owe a great deal to various friends and colleagues. In particular I wish to thank Rees Davies of University College, Aberystwyth, David Dumville of Cambridge University and Harry Dickinson of the University of Edinburgh for the time they gave to reading various portions of the typescript. I am especially grateful to the Master and Fellows of Peterhouse, Cambridge, and to the Governing Body of the University of Wales, who awarded me visiting fellowships in 1985. My stay in Aberystwyth was made particularly enjoyable thanks to the hospitality of Rees Davies, Gareth Williams, John Davidson, Martin Fitzpatrick and their wives. I wish also to express my gratitude to the University of Pittsburgh for granting me leave of absence during the Fall Term, 1985. At various times, I benefited from the encouragement of Janelle Greenberg of the University of Pittsburgh, John Pocock of Johns Hopkins University, Joseph Lee of University College, Cork, James Shiel of the University of Sussex and Lord Dacre of Glanton, erstwhile Master of Peterhouse. Brian Wormald, my friend and old supervisor at Peterhouse (1942–3), gave me many hours of his time forty years later. James Shiel provided the epigraph. Like many others I have incurred a debt to Linda Randall, Hazel Dunn and Maureen Ashby. Mr William Davies of Cambridge University Press has displayed patience and sympathy beyond the call of duty. My deepest debt, however, is to Kate, my wife for over thirty years, who encouraged me to persevere in an enterprise which underwent several strange metamorphoses.

Bury St Edmunds   HUGH KEARNEY

Preface to the second edition

On St George's Day 1993 John Major, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, addressed a group of the Conservative party as follows:

Fifty years from now Britain will still be the country of long shadows on county [cricket] grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs, dog lovers and pools fillers and – as George Orwell said – 'old maids bicycling to Holy Communion through the morning mist' – and – if we get our way Shakespeare still read in school. Britain will survive unamendable in all essentials. (quoted Richard Weight, *Patriots: National Identity in Britain 1940–2000*, London, 2002, p. 666)

This passage illustrates vividly the type of Anglo-centricity which I criticise in *The British Isles*. John Major refers to Britain, an island which encompasses Wales and Scotland, but the 'Britain' which he evokes is very much an idealised version of southern England. There is no hint here of the industrialised cities of northern England, South Wales and south-west Scotland with their commitment to football grounds set in grimly urban surroundings. Nor is there any hint of the way in which new ethnic groups are changing the 'essentials' of Britain, especially in the capital, London. Missing also from Major's nostalgic musing is any sense that the most determinedly British element of the United Kingdom is to be found in Northern Ireland, where in some Unionist areas pavements are painted red, white and blue.

The Southern England of John Major's vision undoubtedly exists. It is, however, merely part of a wider United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, whose history until recently also included that of 'the British Isles' as a whole. The various histories of Australia, Canada and New Zealand all reflect the impact of a wider 'British Isles' history in which English, Welsh, Irish and Scots ethnicities have interacted with one another. The history of the United States is also linked with that of 'the British Isles' from which Scots, Irish and Ulster Scots as well as Anglo-Saxons emigrated. Finally, immigration from the wider British empire of India, Pakistan, Africa and the Caribbean is now changing what Major calls the 'essentials' of Britain. 'The old maids bicycling to Holy

Communion through the morning mist' are very much an embattled species. Indeed, in modern Britain, there are as many worshippers attending the mosque as those the parish church.

What is becoming clearer is an awareness that the United Kingdom is not a nation state with a unique past (a 'sonderweg') but a multi-ethnic conglomerate whose shifting patterns of historical development resemble those of states such as Spain or the Habsburg Monarchy. The English scholar Gerald Brenan wrote a classic work entitled *The Spanish Labyrinth* (1940) which analysed the interaction of the various 'nations' of what we call 'Spain'. It is this, in my view, which should be our model for histories of the United Kingdom rather than a comforting but now simple-minded recourse to 'the Englishman and his History'. To say this, of course, is to take part in a debate which has a long history. (It may be followed in Hugh MacDougall's brilliant short book *Racial Myth in English History: Trojans, Teutons and Anglo-Saxons* (1982.)

The title of this book is 'The British Isles', not 'Britain', in order to emphasise the multi-ethnic character of our intertwined histories. Almost inevitably many within the Irish Republc find it objectionable, much as Basques or Catalans resent the use of the term 'Spain'. As Seamus Heaney put it when he objected to being included in an anthology of British Poetry:

> Don't be surprised
> If I demur, for, be advised
> My passport's green.
> No glass of ours was ever raised
> To toast the Queen.
> (*Open Letter, Field day Pamphlet no.2 1983*)

But what is the alternative to 'The British Isles?' Attempts to encourage the use of such terms as 'The Atlantic Archipelago' and 'The Isles' have met with criticism because of their vagueness. Perhaps one solution is to use 'the British Isles' in inverted commas ('quotes' in American usage). All this is not to say that a 'British Isles' approach is the only way of dealing with their complex interrelated history. It is misleading, for example, to ignore the different ways in which the four nations have been involved in Europe. Irish missionaries in particular played a key role during the so-called Dark Ages. After the Norman Conquest, England and, later, Scotland were closely involved in France. During the Reformation and Counter-Reformation period, England, Ireland and Scotland were all linked with Europe in various ways, although the experience of Ireland was very different from that of the other two nations. At a later period,

the impact of the French Revolution was much greater in Ireland than elsewhere in the archipelago. Thus a 'British Isles' approach should not be taken as ruling out a European emphasis as the basis of alternative interpretations. At the time of writing, for example, it looks as if the Republic of Ireland is moving towards a more European future than that of a United Kingdom which is still coping with the challenges of its post-imperial past.

In preparing this new edition, I should like to record my thanks for their help to John Morrison, Proinsias O Drisceoil, Rees Davies and Gareth Williams as well as to Michael Watson, Isabelle Dambricourt and Carrie Cheek of Cambridge University Press, and to my keen-eyed copy-editor, Sue Dickinson. As before my wife, Kate, made an indispensable contribution.

Bardwell, 2005   HUGH KEARNEY

MAP: the British Isles

Introduction

This is not a piece of national history, though it owes a great deal to the work of more nationally minded historians. It is an attempt to examine, within short compass, the interaction of the various major cultures of the British Isles from the Roman period onwards. The emphasis throughout is upon the British Isles, in the belief that it is only by adopting a 'Britannic' approach that historians can make sense of the particular segment in which they may be primarily interested, whether it be 'England', 'Ireland', 'Scotland', 'Wales', Cornwall or the Isle of Man.

To concentrate upon a single 'national' history, which is based upon the political arrangements of the present, is to run the risk of being imprisoned within a cage of partial assumptions which lead to the perpetuation of nationalist myths and ideologies. Herbert Butterfield, in his essay, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London, 1931), stressed the importance of trying to see all sides of past conflicts. The modern world in his view arose from both Protestant and Catholic, not from one or the other. In the same way, no single 'national' interpretation, whether English, Irish, Scottish or Welsh, can be treated as self-contained. A 'Britannic' framework is an essential starting point for a fuller understanding of these so-called 'national' pasts.

This point might hardly seem worth stressing, were it not for the fact that, in its continued use of a 'nation' paradigm, the historiography of the British Isles still bears traces of its late nineteenth-century origins. The professionalisation of history brought with it the acceptance not only of Leopold von Ranke's critical methods but also his stress upon the role of 'nations' in history. Ranke believed that the 'nation' was the divinely created unit at work in universal history, with each nation having its own appointed moment of destiny. So far as England is concerned, the publication of William Stubbs' *Constitutional History of England* (from 1866 onwards) marked the introduction of history on the Rankean model. Stubbs' *History* was acceptably 'modern' in its critical use of primary sources. There was also no doubt that Stubbs saw the 'nation' as the appropriate unit for a historian to concentrate upon.

Nation-based history became the basis around which the new academic subject of history expanded. The *English Historical Review* was founded in 1886 and in due course national history reviews were founded first for Scotland (1904) and then for Ireland (1938) and Wales (1970). In the new elementary and secondary schools of the late nineteenth century, history was taught on national lines as a means of inculcating the virtue of patriotism. Libraries took 'nations' as the appropriate cataloguing division for the 'subject of History'. During the twentieth century, long after the original impulse from Ranke had been lost sight of, the writing of history along 'national' lines seemed axiomatic.

The extent to which the writing of history was so strongly nation-based was disguised by the way in which English historians shifted between the use of 'British' and 'English' as if the two were somehow equivalent. Three examples of this tendency may suffice, all taken from major historians.

The historical development of England is based upon the fact that her frontiers against Europe are drawn by Nature and cannot be the subject of dispute . . . In short, a great deal of what is peculiar in English history is due to the obvious fact that Great Britain is an island. (L. B. Namier, *England in the Age of the American Revolution* (London, 1930), pp. 6–7)

In the Second World War, the British people came of age . . . The British people had set out to destroy Hitler . . . No English soldier who rode with the tanks into liberated Belgium . . . The British were the only people who went through both world wars from beginning to end . . . The British empire declined . . . Few even sang 'England Arise'. England had risen all the same. (A. J. P. Taylor, *England 1914–45* (Oxford, 1966), p. 600)

Nevertheless, something can be learned about the British political system . . . The early attainment of national identity is one of England's most distinctive features . . . To this extent British political development may be plausibly regarded . . . If we are to understand the reasons for the peculiarities of the English political system . . . Quite apart from all the consequences that have flowed from Britain's imperial role. (Keith Thomas, 'The United Kingdom', in Raymond Grew, ed., *Crises of Political Development in Europe and the United States* (Princeton, 1978), pp. 44–5)

These examples indicate that a single nation-based approach is insufficient. Much as the historians concerned wish to keep within an 'English' framework, they are led in spite of themselves to refer to a wider dimension.

There was, however, an earlier tradition of historiography whose practitioners had been willing to consider the histories of Ireland, Scotland and Wales as an essential part of the story. Thomas Babington Macaulay may have entitled his master work *History of England* (1848–61) but it was, in effect, a history of the British Isles during what he saw as the

crucial period of modern history, the Glorious Revolution of 1688. James Anthony Froude is best known for history of England in the sixteenth century but his study of *The English in Ireland* (1872) together with his novel *The Two Chiefs of Dunboy* (1889) reveal a remarkable understanding of Ireland. W. E. H. Lecky's *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (1878–90) included Ireland and Scotland as well as England within its overall perspective. Elie Halévy's *History of the English People* (1913), despite the limitations of its title, took a wide view of its topic, with extensive treatment being given to Ireland and Scotland. Halévy apart, the influence of these writers tended to decline in the early twentieth century because their narrative approach, their use of the concept of 'race' and their handling of sources were thought to be unprofessional. With them, a 'British Isles' approach declined also. Thus, the modern French historian François Bedarida, modelling himself on Halévy some years later (1979), confined his attention largely to English history. For much of the twentieth century, indeed, within the British Isles, history has been taught and written along national lines, and hence tied to nationalist ideologies and nation-building. In England this approach was represented by such figures as Arthur Bryant. Within the schools, the teaching of English Literature took on a nationalist colouring under the influence of the Newbolt Report of 1921. In Ireland, exponents of the ideology of 'Irish Ireland' put in place the framework of a nationalist history curriculum soon after De Valera came to power in 1932. In the United States, also, ethnocentric attitudes among immigrants from the British Isles have encouraged the production of 'national' histories geared to specific English or Irish ethnic tastes. The American appeal to 'Manifest Destiny' was of course a prime example of nationalist history.

The concept of 'nation' provided modern historians with a convenient framework around which to organise their materials but a price has had to be paid. What later became national boundaries were extended backwards into a past where they had little or no relevance, with the consequence that earlier tribal or prenational societies were lost to sight. The border between 'Wales' and 'England' is a case in point. It is now assumed that Herefordshire and Shropshire are part of 'England' and that their inhabitants are 'English', with all the appropriate 'mental furniture' to go with that term. In fact these border counties have been the scene of intermingling between 'Welsh' and 'English' cultures over a long period of time. The same point may also be made about the border between 'England' and 'Scotland', which was drawn at one time to include the (now Scottish) Lothians within England and at another to include Celtic Cumbria within the kingdom of Strathclyde. The presence of 'Arthur's Seat' in the heart of Edinburgh is a reminder that the Lothians, Wales

and Cornwall were once linked by a common Celtic culture stretching from Traprain Law to Tintagel. The modern distinction between Ulster and south-west Scotland did not exist in the later middle ages, since the channel dividing the two areas served as a unifying element for the seaborne post-Viking society which occupied the 'Isles'. Thus to make sense of so much variation over time requires a 'Britannic' framework, although this need not exclude awareness of the influence of Europe and of a wider world.

This point may be reinforced if it is borne in mind that episodes which are generally recognised as having been of decisive importance in the history of the various 'nations' of the British Isles in fact transcended the national boundaries of a later date. The Roman Conquest, the Barbarian invasions, the Viking raids, the Norman Conquest, the Reformation and the Industrial Revolution were all 'events' which affected the British Isles as a whole and brought about crucial changes in the relations between the various Britannic societies of the period concerned. The so-called English Civil Wars were in fact multi-national events which had long-term consequences for all three kingdoms. To deal with any one of these episodes requires in every case something wider than a national framework. The only possible exception is perhaps that of the Roman Conquest, from which Ireland was spared, but even here recent research has revealed the importance of Roman contacts with Ireland. Indeed it has been suggested by Professor Barry Cunliffe that Irish mercenaries served in the Roman army before returning home. There is in any case the influence upon Ireland of the Latin culture of the later Roman empire introduced through the medium of Christianity. Pictish Scotland is also now receiving more attention.

The present author is not alone in pressing for a 'Britannic' approach. Several recent examples of a similar impatience with the straitjacket of exclusively national categories come readily to mind. Michael Hechter, in his stimulating book *Internal Colonialism* (1975), used the concepts of 'core' and 'periphery' in an attempt to elucidate the relations between England and what he termed, misleadingly, the 'Celtic Fringe'. Hechter's main point was that England established a colonial relationship with other parts of the British Isles, from which it alone benefited. John Le Patourel's study *The Norman Empire* (1976) was a successful attempt to avoid a narrowing concentration upon Norman England by examining the impact of the Norman Conquest within the British Isles as a whole. Hugh Trevor-Roper's fine essay 'The Unity of the Kingdom' (though open to criticism for its use of 'race' as a historical concept) stood out from other contributions within a collection entitled *The English World* (1982) by its willingness to move beyond a merely English perspective. John Pocock,

in his powerful article 'The Limits and Divisions of British History: In Search of an Unknown Subject' (*American Historical Review*, April 1982), attempted to define a field of study that might properly be called 'British History'. Pocock emphasised the political aspects of 'British Isles' history in an essay which, though brief, ranged widely in time and space. Since that pioneering effort Pocock has remained at the forefront of efforts to promote a wider archipelagic approach in the history of poltical thought during the early modern period. Oxford and Cambridge, for example, once pre-eminent centres of English-based history, now encourage the study of the history of 'The British Isles'.

My own efforts to deal with the problems raised by 'national' histories have led me to see what I have called the 'Britannic melting pot' in terms of a complex of interacting cultures, an approach which carries with it the danger of emphasising the importance of ethnicity at the expense of 'class'. 'Culture' is not the only concept available to historians but it has the advantage of enabling the historian to raise questions about life-style, customs, religion and attitudes to the past in a more fluid way than if confined to a one-dimensional framework. Cultures change over time, are influenced by other cultures, cross national boundaries and often contain sub-cultures within themselves. 'Nation', in contrast, is a term of rhetoric used to evoke feelings of unity in response to a particular situation. When Churchill spoke of 'Britain's finest hour' or De Valera referred to 'the struggle of a small nation for its independence over seven centuries' they were attempting to sway the emotions of their audiences, not to expound a detached piece of history. It is very doubtful whether the term 'nation' can escape these emotional overtones. One sees this most clearly perhaps in the case of post-colonial Africa where the use of 'nation' all too often conceals the true realities of tribal cultures. From this point of view, it is an accident of history that several states (nations?) eventually made their appearance in the context of British Isles history. The realities with which the historian should deal are the cultures which lie behind the label nation-state. The concept of 'nation' stresses the differences between a particular society and its neighbours. A Britannic approach, in contrast, would emphasise how much these cultures have experienced in common.

With this in mind there is still a good deal to be said for approaching the history of the British Isles during the immediate post-Roman centuries along traditional lines, as a conflict for supremacy between 'Celts' and 'Anglo-Saxons'. It should be made clear, however, that these terms do not refer to distinct 'races' but to broad linguistic and cultural differences. The Celtic and Germanic languages are both Indo-European. Both sets of peoples came from central Europe. In their tribal organisation they

closely resembled one another. There is nothing to be gained by using
the outmoded nineteenth-century concept of 'race'. We would do better
to see the British Isles from the fifth century onwards as an arena in which
several Celtic cultures and several Germanic cultures competed with
each other. In Ireland there were differences between north and south,
in Scotland between Picts, 'Irish', 'British' and Anglo-Saxons. Among
the Anglo-Saxons in 'England' similar contrasts long existed between
Northumbria and Mercia and Wessex, as well as within each kingdom.
What is clear about the immediate post-Roman centuries is that some
'Britannic' framework is necessary to do justice to a situation in which
the Briton (and Celtic-speaking) St Patrick brought Christianity to Ire-
land (most probably the northern areas of it) during the fifth century and
Irish monks in turn became missionaries to the inhabitants of 'Scotland'
and north Britain. The life of St Cuthbert is a case in point. He was
originally a monk at Melrose (a Celtic monastery in today's Scotland),
but then moved to Lindisfarne, an island off the coast of what is now
Northumberland. After the Viking invasions his body finally ended up
in the Norman cathedral at Durham, where his memory is revered as an
Anglo-Saxon saint. Historians of art devised the term 'Hiberno-Saxon'
(now in turn replaced by 'insular') to create a broader framework than
traditional national categories. It is time for historians at large to follow
their example and to break away from the concept of 'nation', which they
inherited from nineteenth-century historiography, and which is too rigid
to use when dealing with the complexities of the post-Roman centuries.

The same judgement may be made with equal force about the three
'Scandinavian centuries', from the ninth to the eleventh, when large areas
of the British Isles fell under the control of first, raiders and then settlers
from Denmark and Norway. Modern historians play down the impor-
tance of this period but it is clear that the cultures of the British Isles
underwent profound changes during these years. After this common
experience, 'England', 'Ireland', 'Scotland' and 'Wales' all emerged as
very different societies in the second half of the eleventh century from
what they had been earlier. Marc Bloch saw this as the first phase of
feudalism, but, whatever term is used, the old structures of the 'Celtic'
and 'Anglo-Saxon' worlds undoubtedly underwent radical changes.
Were it not for the clumsiness of phraseology, terms such as 'Anglo-
Scandinavia', 'Hiberno-Scandinavia' and 'Scoto-Scandinavia' might be
appropriate.

A new period began with the coming of the Normans (in the mid-
eleventh century so far as 'England' and 'Wales' were concerned; in the
twelfth century, in the case of 'Scotland' and 'Ireland'). The British Isles
were drawn away from Scandinavia and into closer contact with northern

France as a consequence, though it was not until the mid-fourteenth century (perhaps later) that the links of northern 'Scotland' with Norway were finally severed. Continental-style feudalism now took root marked by self-conscious knightly institutions, and a greater emphasis upon links with the Crown. In the Church, the authority of the hierarchy became more pronounced. Although 'Normanised Scotland' established its independence within this Britannic framework during the fourteenth century, a Britannic approach is still necessary if attitudes and assumptions then are to be understood. The term 'Norman Empire' becomes increasingly unsatisfactory after the loss of Normandy in 1209, although the dominance of French culture continued until the late fourteenth century. The rise of St George as the patron saint of England indicates that a change of national identity was under way, although why this particular figure was chosen to replace 'The Holy Edward' remains unclear (a similar problem surrounds the choice of St Andrew for Scotland). Westminster Abbey still remains as a monument to 'The Holy Edward' though challenged from the late fourteenth century by St George's Chapel, Windsor.

During the early sixteenth century, further profound changes took place within the British Isles deriving largely from continental influences. Reformation and Counter-Reformation were the common experience of all the societies of the Britannic melting pot. Though European in origin, these movements became closely connected with the expansion of the influence of the English Crown, throughout the British Isles. The creation of a Protestant English empire was one of the main features of Britannic history during this period, leading to the extension of the influence of a biblically orientated culture throughout the British Isles, and the coast of North America. In due course, Scotland was also to be associated with the enterprise when, after the Union of the Crowns in 1603, Scottish and English settlers took part in the plantation of Ulster. Ireland became a society increasingly divided among Catholics, Anglicans and Presbyterians. The effects of this proved to be of lasting significance not merely within the British Isles but also in British possessions overseas. In Canada and Australia the conflict of the 'Orange' and the 'Green', like so much else, requires a Britannic framework for its elucidation.

With the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a further series of major shifts took place within the British Isles. A new industrialised and urbanised culture took root in northern England. Large-scale movements of population took place in response to the opportunities offered by an expanding industrial society. In addition to migrants from local areas, English emigrants were drawn into south Wales and Ulster, Scottish Highlanders and Irish into Glasgow and its environs, Irish and Welsh into the Liverpool area. The major

cities of the British Isles became multi-ethnic societies in which varied ethnic groupings competed for economic security, social status and political influence. During the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the diversity of this multi-ethnic society was still further increased by an influx of Jewish refugees from eastern Europe into London, Leeds, Manchester and Glasgow. Immigrants also arrived from other areas including Spain and Lithuania. The name of Wolfson College, Oxford commemorates the success of one of these newcomers. It was not an isolated case.

It was during these years of industrialisation at home that a new British empire was created overseas in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Though they formed part of the 'history of the English-speaking peoples' (to use Churchill's phrase), these emigrants were by no means all English. The new empire was 'Britannic', drawing for its population upon Scottish, Irish and Welsh as well as English. In due course, after the Second World War, the former colonies became even more multi-ethnic as a result of the arrival of a new wave of immigrants from Europe.

A paradoxical and quite unexpected turn to the imperial story was to occur after 1945 with the arrival in Britain of large numbers of immigrants from the West Indies, India, Pakistan and parts of Africa, at a time when the former Indian empire and the former colonial empire were ceasing to exist. The full significance of this wave of immigration has yet to be fully assessed. In the 1980s cultural tensions involving various immigrant groups led to serious outbreaks of rioting. It may be, however, that the creation of a multi-ethnic society in some parts of Britain is merely one of the ways in which the various societies within the British Isles are coming to resemble the United States. The partial Americanisation of popular culture within the British Isles had begun in the 1930s with the influence of American films. Since then other aspects of American culture have also taken root on both sides of the Irish Sea. Future historians may come to see this as a more important development than entry into the European Economic Community (1973).

It remains to mention the political changes which have taken place in the twentieth century in the wake of two world wars. In the years immediately after the end of the First World War, the United Kingdom felt the impact of a successful nationalist revolution in Ireland. The result of the conflict was the creation of an independent state in southern Ireland, leaving the remaining six counties of the north-east as a semi-autonomous 'province' within the United Kingdom. There was now a political border within the British Isles for the first time since the sixteenth century.

One of the consequences of the creation of an Irish Free State and later (1949) of the Republic of Ireland was the partial elimination of Ireland from historical interpretations of British history. It was almost

as if British historians had come to believe that it was possible to write a history of their own 'nations' without mentioning the Irish Republic or the historical territory which it occupied. In the case of the *Oxford Illustrated History of Britain* this tendency had the unfortunate effect of a map being printed in which Northern Ireland appears in some detail while the rest of Ireland remains a blank even though the period under discussion is well before the partition of 1920 (however, there is now a multi-authored, multi-volume *Short Oxford History of the British Isles*).

The same criticism may be made of Irish histories in which Ireland appears in isolation and not as an island linked historically with Britain for well over a thousand years. In fact, of course, close economic and cultural ties continued to exist between the United Kingdom and the Irish Free State. Informal cultural ties did not disappear. Universities in the Republic drew, as before, upon the United Kingdom for external examiners. Dublin civil servants in the Department of Finance long remained in touch with their London counterparts. The career of the great Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh (1904–1967) is worth mentioning in this connection. Kavanagh learned about poetry from English models such as 'Gray's Elegy' and he remained very much the anglophile. The novelist John McGahern was able to take refuge in England after a clash with church authorities. Links were not as close as they had once been but they were nonetheless real. During the 1950s and 1980s Irish immigration into England took place on a scale unequalled since the 1880s. During the 1960s, as 'Eire' emerged from its self-imposed isolation under De Valera, contacts increased still further. During the 1970s, both states joined the European Economic Community. They were also drawn into close communication as a result of the continued crisis over Northern Ireland. In spite of themselves, the two governments were forced to recognise the existence of a 'Britannic' dimension.

The viewpoint adopted in this book is that the histories of what are normally regarded as four distinct 'nations' appear more intelligible if they are seen first within a general British Isles context and secondly if they are seen in terms of 'cultures' and 'sub-cultures'. Upon closer examination what seem to be 'national' units dissolve into a number of distinctive cultures with their own perceptions of the past, of social status ('class' is here seen as subordinate to culture), of religion and of many other aspects of life. As with any historical approach, however, the problem is complicated by the inevitability of historical change. Cultures change and interact over time. Where nationally minded historians tend to stress continuity over time between, say, the 'Scots' or the 'Irish' of different periods, a cultural approach involves the recognition that the perceptions of one period are radically different from those of another.

In 1989, I argued that at least eight cultures co-existed in the British Isles. Thus in Wales, the gulf between the Welsh-speaking, Calvinist Methodist north-west and the more cosmopolitan, English-speaking south indicated the drawbacks of speaking in terms of a single Welsh nationality. I regarded the Welsh-Jewish poet Danny Abse as a product of Cardiff rather than of 'Wales' as such. The Welsh nationalist Saunders Lewis could be viewed as reacting against the environment of his Merseyside birthplace to become the spokesman of the Welsh heartland. In Scotland, the situation appeared as more complex. Here the southwest, centred on the Clydeside conurbation, may be seen as a culture in its own right, linked in conflicting sentiments with the Protestants and Catholics of 'Ulster'. In contrast the western Highlands and the Hebrides constituted a sub-culture, as did Orkney and Shetland. However, the exploitation of North Sea oil since the 1970s has clearly been a source of profound cultural change in both of these areas as well as on the east coast. What had seemed like a clear contrast between east and west had begun to dissolve into new cultural patterns. Ireland, partitioned in 1921, remained divided at the end of the century, but the contrast between a largely agrarian south and an industrial north had by 2000 changed radically. The Republic of Ireland was now an independent member of the European Union, enjoying a period of unprecedented prosperity, whereas Northern Ireland, divided by sectarianism and civil unrest, had lost its former industrial base. Finally, in England, the decline of the industrial north and the growing prosperity of the south, linked to the EEC markets, accentuated the cultural differences between these two areas. Overall, the influence of London and the south-east increased, thanks to such factors as television, motorways, the growth of the London market and the influence of the EEC. Towns such as Brighton, Bath and Cambridge, fifty or more miles from London, have become part of a southern commuter-belt in which people live while working in London.

In 1989, there was a good deal to be said for regarding the United Kingdom as consisting of a dominant metropolitan culture (itself exposed to transatlantic influences) and a number of provincial sub-cultures, with the Republic of Ireland enjoying informal cultural and political links with England, Scotland and, of course, Northern Ireland. By 2000, however, this model no longer did justice to the complex cultural patterns of the British Isles. Immigration during the post-war years had now brought a new multi-ethnicity to the United Kingdom and especially to London. South Asian and African cultures were now making their presence felt in all manner of ways. There were now many more than eight cultures within what was increasingly referred to in the media as a 'multicultural society', a point exemplified in the emergence of Muslims as a political force to be

reckoned with during the election campaign of 2005. Where does Ireland stand in all this? Protestant culture in Northern Ireland still seems more closely linked to Glasgow and to Dublin than it is to London. As for the rest of Ireland, cultural influences deriving from southern England and from the United States, and from Europe, contend for supremacy. Tourism, the common law, English newspapers, English TV, English-language books, contact with recent Irish emigrants to London and Birmingham and a close involvement, since 1985, with the affairs of Northern Ireland all combine to link the Republic and Britain. The new prosperity of the Republic has also brought drug problems and issues linked with immigration similar to those of Britain. However, the Republic, despite its long historical links with Britain and its common interest in Northern Ireland, was now linked with the euro. Benefiting from its links with Europe, it seems to be following its own distinctive path apart from that of the rest of 'The British Isles'.

Outside the British Isles the direct influence of the United Kingdom has waned. In Australia, films such as *Breaker Morant* and *Gallipoli* illustrate a growing Australian nationalism. In both Australia and Canada, a large influx of European immigrants after 1945 has also helped to weaken cultural connections with Britain, a tendency accentuated in Canada by its proximity to the United States and by the growth of French-speaking nationalism in Quebec. Even in New Zealand strong emotional links with Britain had begun to weaken in the 1980s. By the 1970s throughout the former British empire, in India, Pakistan, Africa and the Far East, it seemed as if British Isles culture would be mediated through the United States. Within the British Isles itself, American influence in the form of military bases, fast-food chains, TV programmes and films continued to grow. To an observer at the end of the twentieth century it might well seem that the various cultures of the British Isles would be submerged in a vast transatlantic, indeed global cultural aggregation.

Postscript

As stated above it was clear by the year 2000 that post-imperial Britain was home to far more than eight cultures. The census of 2001 revealed that immigrants from the Caribbean, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Africa constitute 8 per cent of the British population today, much larger than the total population of Wales and nearly as large as Scotland (see Tariq Modood, 'Britishness out of Immigration and Anti-racism', in H. Brocklehurst and Robert Philips, eds., *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain* (London, 2000), pp. 85–98). To Modood it seems likely that non-white ethnic groups will become the majority in several English cities

in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, including by far the most populous city of Europe, London (Modood, *ibid*). The impact of the influx of the largest group of immigrants – from the Republic of Ireland during the 1950s and 1960s onwards – also must not be lost sight of.

Post-war immigration has raised crucial questions about identity which are now being addressed by the government. There is also concern about the status of traditional cultures within a modern, secular society. For example, the imposition of unacceptable marriage partners upon young girls has caused serious problems. As one social worker of Islamic background puts it, 'We are talking about domestic violence against women and in extreme cases murder: the excuse is family honour' (*The Guardian*, 9 December 2004). The right to make critical comments about the Prophet Muhammad is also a highly sensitive issue, as Salman Rushdie found out to his cost when he published *The Satanic Verses* in 1988 and became the object of a 'fatwah'. More recently, in 2004, the journalist Charles Moore asked whether Muhammed could be regarded as a paedophile for taking a nine-year-old child as his bride. What appeared to Moore as the legitimate exercise of free speech was denounced by the Muslim Association as a 'clear incitement to religious hatred and division' (*The Guardian*, 14 December 2004). A few days after Charles Moore's article appeared, members of the Sikh community in Birmingham protested against the performance of a play Bezhti (Dishonour) and threats of continued violence led to its being abandoned. It was also reported that the dramatist concerned, Gurpreet Kaur Bhati, a young Sikh woman, had been forced into hiding because of death threats (*The Guardian*, 21 December 2004). Adding to these problems is the fact that unemployment is markedly higher than the national average among those of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin, in part no doubt because of their lower educational qualifications but seen by them as racial discrimination. Some of the fundamental questions raised are discussed in Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA, 2000), and Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism* (Oxford, 2001).

1   The Celtic societies of the British Isles

John of Gaunt in Shakespeare's *Richard II* speaks of

>   this scepter'd isle . . .
> This precious stone set in a silver sea . . .
> This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England . . .

These powerful lines may be seen as representing the unspoken assumption of so many historians that 'England' is for all intents and purposes an island. It is, of course, merely part, though now the most populated part, of the larger island of an Atlantic archipelago situated off the coast of north-west Europe. Shakespeare's poetry, however, may be taken as reflecting the almost total dominance which English culture, more properly perhaps the culture of south-eastern England, has achieved throughout the British Isles in the modern period. The typical inhabitant of the British Isles is today English-speaking (though a minority may speak Gaelic, or Urdu, at home).

The dominance of English culture marks the culmination of a complex and prolonged process, which is far from complete even today. As a historical starting point, however, it must be set on one side. For the purpose of 'making sense' of the history of the British Isles, we must go beyond the Anglo-Saxons and the Romans to the Celtic Iron Age, which left a lasting stamp upon the languages, place-names and cultures of these islands.

A full prehistory would need to go much further back, possibly to the mesolithic period of c. 7000 BC when human beings returned to the British Isles in the wake of a retreating Ice Age before land bridges between the islands and between Britain and the continent were finally washed away. This period – of hunting, fishing and food gathering – was followed (c. 4000 BC) by the introduction of agriculture and the establishment of settled communities by migrants from the Mediterranean. This was the so-called Neolithic Revolution. Megalithic tombs erected during this period indicate the high priority which these societies accorded to the afterlife. It has been suggested that the building of Stonehenge (begun

c. 2500 BC but extending over a prolonged period of several hundred years) required 30 million man-hours to complete. (The long barrows of the early neolithic period needed a mere 10,000 man-hours.) The Irish passage-graves, built at much the same time as Stonehenge, suggest the allocation of resources on the same scale, possibly under the dictates of a theocratic priestly class. For much of this period it is clear that the Irish Sea served not as a barrier but as an avenue linking related societies. Passage-graves, such as Bryn Celli Du on the Isle of Anglesey, are markedly similar to those found on the east coast of Ireland in the Boyne valley and Lough Crew.

During the Bronze Age (of roughly the second millennium BC) similar Britannic patterns may be discerned. The introduction of metalworking in bronze led to the creation of economic conditions in which trade across the Irish Sea in Irish copper and Cornish tin (the metals required for the production of bronze) took place on a regular basis. The Middle Bronze Age saw the creation of an axe industry which one archaeologist has described as 'neither English nor Irish but Britannico-Hibernian'. In the Late Bronze Age tools and ornaments from the British Isles reached a wide European market.

In many ways, the coming of the Iron Age may have represented an economic setback. During the first millennium BC, from c. 750, the Bronze Age communities of the British Isles faced the challenge of a more efficient and cheaper technology based upon iron. Widespread changes took place, though it is not clear how far they were due to invasion and how far to adaptation by native communities. The spread of massive hill-forts in southern Britain, for example, suggests the growth of larger political units based upon the dominance of a military aristocracy. Until recently, an 'invasion' hypothesis, distinguishing between three periods from Ages A, B and C, each marked by a different group of invaders, held the field. Since the 1960s, greater emphasis has been placed upon the response made by indigenous elements, though the influence of some groups of newcomers on the east coast and in the south-east must be allowed for. Whatever the explanation, there is no doubt that the communities with which the Romans came into contact in the first century BC were Celtic-speaking, iron-using societies organised on a tribal pattern.

Place-names may be seen as illustrating a common Britannic cultural framework during the pre-Roman period. The place-name 'Brent' associated today with the London suburbs of Brent and Brentford is linked with the river 'Braint' in Anglesey and with northern British tribal groups, known as the Brigantes. The name of the Brigantes is paralleled in Europe in such place-names as Bregenz and Brienne. It is also associated with the goddess Brigantia in Britain and with the Irish goddess Brigid, 'the

Figure 1. *Horse trapping in Yorkshire*
This horse trapping provides a glimpse of the La Tène culture which flourished in northern Europe during the immediate pre-Roman period, and existed on both sides of the Irish Sea. Recent excavations (2003) at Ferrybridge, west Yorkshire have revealed a chariot burial, but detailed evidence of this Celtic culture in the territory of the Brigantes has been slow to emerge from beneath the layers of successive conquests.

exalted one', who was patron of poetry, healing and metalwork. In due course, Brigid the goddess was to be transformed into St Brigid. The parallels provided by Brigantia, Brent and Brigid clearly point to the existence of common cultural links throughout the British Isles, not merely in a 'Celtic fringe'.

Figure 2. *Horse trapping in Co. Galway*
This horse trapping from the west of Ireland is very similar to that from Yorkshire, but Celtic society and La Tène art survived much longer in Ireland than in southern Britain. Irish place-names, genealogies and even epic poetry survive to cast a rich light upon Celtic civilisation, evidence which has largely vanished in the neighbouring island.

In addition, the art and language of these societies indicate that they shared a common culture with the Celts of continental Europe, groups of whom crossed the Alps and sacked Rome in 390 BC. The Celts did not form a race, any more than the 'English-speaking peoples' constitute a race today. Nineteenth-century historians may have looked upon the Celts as a race with distinct physical features but there is no sound basis for this view. When discussing the Iron Age societies of the British Isles during the first century BC the most we can say is that they spoke one or other of the dialects of a common Celtic language, that their religious beliefs show a common pattern associated with such attitudes as a reverence for rivers and wells and the cult of the severed head, that their social ideals tended to be those of a military aristocracy (though not all the societies of the British Isles were equally military in their outlook) and their art, at this date (c. 100 BC), was heavily influenced by the free-flowing 'La Tène' style.

Cult-objects provide a source of evidence for such links. As Anne Ross has shown in her book *Pagan Celtic Britain* (1967), similar types of ritual-artifact are to be found throughout the British Isles. The head was the Celtic symbol *par excellence*. The Celts seem to have regarded the human

head with particular reverence as the seat of the human spirit. It is not surprising, then, that carvings of heads should be found in northern and southern Britain as well as in Ireland. The most famous Celtic head is the Medusa mask in the Roman baths in Bath. Other striking examples are to be found in Ireland. There is little doubt that the cult of the head was widespread throughout the British Isles. In modern times, it has survived at St Winifred's Well (Holywell, North Wales) where a healing spring is said to have appeared after St Winifred was beheaded. Second only to the cult of the head was the devotion paid to the horned fertility god Cernunnos, who was the 'horned god' of the Brigantes. Horned heads from Gloucestershire, Cumberland, Kent, Norfolk and Ireland all testify to the widespread character of this cult. Sword-hilts using the head as a main motif are a further source of evidence.

The most lasting evidence of this cultural affinity is language. Celtic languages still survive in Wales, the western part of Ireland and Scotland, the Isle of Man and Brittany (colonised from the Celtic south-west of Britain under pressure from Anglo-Saxon invaders). These languages, with the exception of Welsh, are now under pressure. To the historian, however, they provide an invaluable reminder of the period when Celtic languages were spoken throughout the British Isles. Before the mid-nineteenth century, and the onset of literacy in English throughout Ireland, Wales and Scotland, the Celtic-speaking section of the population was far more numerous than is the case today. It is ironical that the average student of British history is more likely to have an acquaintance with Latin than to have the faintest glimmering of any Celtic language. The survival of such river-names in southern England as 'Ouse' (from *uisce*, water) and 'Avon' (from *afon*, river) is a reminder, as valid in its own way as more physical evidence, of the earlier presence of Celtic-speaking societies in what became Anglo-Saxon England. Hill-forts such as Ditchling Beacon on the Sussex Downs and Maiden Castle in Dorset, which now bear English names, owe their existence to this Celtic phase in Britannic history. The fact remains, of course, that speakers of P-Celtic and Q-Celtic could not understand the other, Welsh and Breton being very different in sound and structure from Irish.

Finally, there is the evidence of art. The influence of the La Tène style, so widespread throughout the Celtic world, was also powerful throughout the British Isles. It is to be seen in such objects as the Torrs Pony-cap (Kirkcudbright), the Turoe Stone (Co. Galway) and the Battersea Shield. Gold torques, thought to have been worn by chiefs, were to be found in both Britain and Ireland at this time. The La Tène style, though more varied in its local manifestation than might appear at first sight, testifies to the influence of a common Celtic culture throughout the British Isles.

To draw attention to this fact is not to say that there was political and social uniformity throughout the area. The existence of tribal groupings in both Britain and Ireland is an indication of political differences at the local level. The Romans, to whom we are indebted for Latin versions of tribal names in the absence of their original Celtic forms, distinguished over twenty tribes in Britain south of the Forth. In Ireland, where political aggregation had not gone as far as it had elsewhere, the number of tribes seems to have been much larger.

One powerful cause of variety was geography, in particular the contrast between Highland and Lowland Zones. It was Sir Cyril Fox who argued in his book *The Personality of Britain* (1932) that the Lowlands would usually be exposed to forces of change before the Highlands. The Highland/Lowland contrast certainly makes good sense when applied to Britain, where north and west form a distinctive geographical area, including a good deal of land over 400 metres above sea-level. Poorer soil and climatic conditions made agriculture more of a challenge in the Highland Zone than it was in the south and east. In a British Isles context, however, the Highland/Lowland contrast is not quite so clear. Ireland, which has been compared to a saucer in which the rim represents the hills and the flat base the central plain, is not, geologically speaking, a Highland Zone. There is no doubt, however, that the narrow seas between north-west Ireland and south-west Scotland linked rather than divided them. At this particular period, however, it may be seen as forming part of a 'cultural Highland Zone', cut off, for better or worse, from the influence of the rising military power of Rome.

Geographical determinism should not be pressed too far, however. It can also be argued that, under certain conditions, the Irish Sea provided a channel of communication linking the Highland Zone with Armorica, Spain and the Mediterranean. This seems to have been what happened during the neolithic period and the Bronze Age. It also seems to have been the case during the fifth and sixth centuries AD when Christian communities on both sides of the Irish Sea retained their links with Christian Europe at a time when the eastern half of Britain was being overrun by Germanic settlers. The Irish presence in Scotland in the sixth century AD and in parts of Wales illustrates the same point. (Scottish Gaelic and Irish Gaelic are in origin the same language.) The name of the Lleyn peninsula in North Wales links it with Leinster.

Barry Cunliffe's wide-ranging study *Facing the Ocean: The Atlantic and Its Peoples* (Oxford, 2001) now provides the framework of an alternative interpretation in which the Irish Sea may be seen as a maritime corridor linking the coasts of western Britain and Ireland with Western Europe (see Map 1). Fox's model of Highland and Lowland Zones now

needs to be supplemented by Cunliffe's Atlantic model in which Cornwall, west Wales, the Isle of Man and the west coast of Scotland all take their place. Cunliffe's work also has the geat merit of showing how the relationship of the Irish Sea Province with Western Europe changed over time. In particular, the Roman conquest of Spain and Gaul weakened the connections which the Irish Sea Province had with those areas. In contrast, as a Roman province from 43 AD the Lowland Zone increased its power and influence. Cunliffe suggests that Irish mercenaries may have joined Roman auxiliary regiments, returning home with a knowledge of a wider world (p. 417).

For the immediate pre-Roman period, Fox's contrast between a Lowland Zone exposed to innovation and a conservative Highland Zone (including Ireland) provides a useful key to the situation. Caesar wrote of the coming of the Belgae to south-east Britain during the first century BC. The archaeological evidence, now more plentiful thanks to recent excavations, supports the view that the Thames estuary and the territories around it were the centre of an innovative Belgic culture, sometimes termed the Aylesford-Swayling culture from key sites associated with it. The newcomers soon began to expand at the expense of their neighbours until by the early first century their influence had reached as far north as the Trent and as far west as the Severn.

The Belgic kingdoms involved in this expansion were the Trinovantes and the Catuvellauni (lacking knowedge of their Celtic names we have to use their Roman equivalents) with their capitals at Verulamium (the modern St Albans) and Camulodunum (the modern Colchester). To the north, the outlying tribes affected were the Iceni and the Coritani, in what are today's Norfolk and Lincolnshire respectively, and to the west the Dobunni in the Cotswolds. The Atrebates to the south lost a good deal of territory to the newcomers and were soon confined to the narrow coastal strip of modern Sussex. It is not surprising that these four tribes seem to have welcomed the coming of the Romans as a lesser evil. The limit of Belgic expansion to the south-west was the tribal territory of the Durotriges centred on today's Dorset. Here the refortification of such hill-forts as Maiden Castle took place in the first century BC, presumably as a defensive measure against the Belgae. The forts were still in active use when the Romans arrived in AD 43 and formed the basis of temporary resistance to the legions of Claudius.

Another contrast between the Highland and Lowland Zones was almost certainly demographic. No firm statistical evidence exists but several strong indicators suggest that there was a considerable increase of population in the Lowlands from the fifth century onwards, well before the Belgic invasions. A good deal of internal colonisation seems to have taken
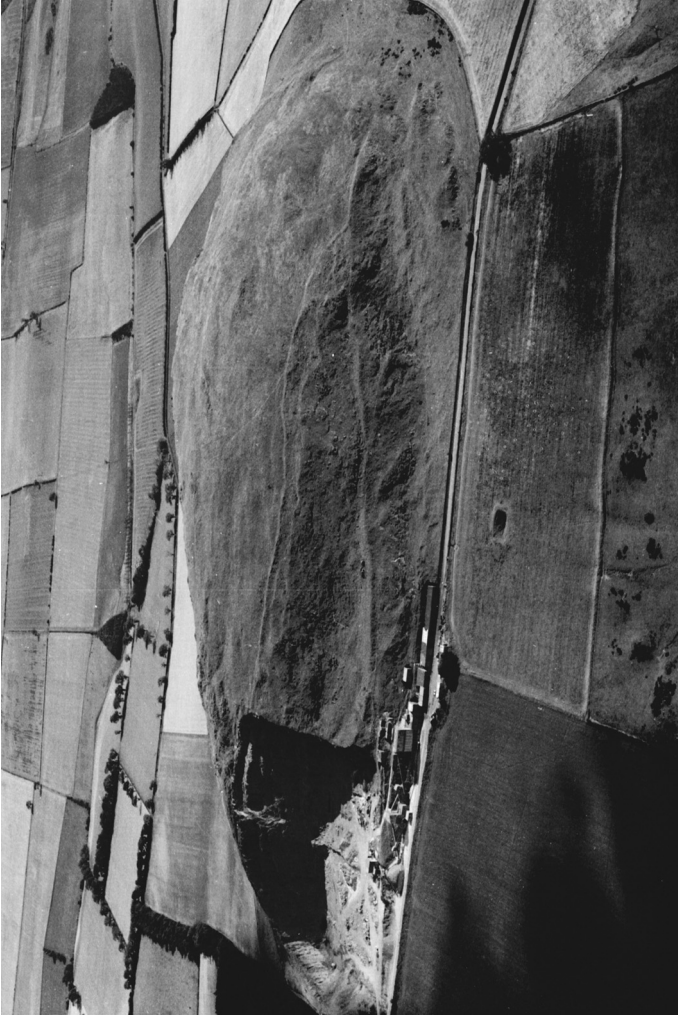
Figure 3. *Traprain Law hill-fort*

Traprain Law hill-fort, south of Edinburgh was the capital of the Votadini. It is a reminder of the Celtic culture which linked the Lothians with the Clyde estuary, Cumbria and Wales. The Welsh epic *The Gododdin*, though of a later date, looks back to this early period, recalling a disastrous British defeat at the hands of the Angles.

place during this period. Regularly shaped field systems existed in the areas surrounding hill-forts which suggests that organised schemes of land clearance were being carried out. The thrust of agriculture lay in the direction of improved tillage, presumably in response to the needs of a growing population, though perhaps also with a market in view. Sheep farming also seems to have been practised on a large scale with the aim of providing the manure necessary for newly cleared land. Crops too became more diversified. Demographic growth may have led to land-hunger and to competition over rights to land. If this were the case, it would provide a plausible explanation for the building of hill-forts as the central points of larger political units. Such hill-forts were in effect urban centres with substantial populations. Thus it has been estimated that Hod Hill, Dorset had nearly 300 houses within its fortifications and a population of 500–1,000. In the territory of the Atrebates, Calleva (on the site of the later Roman town of Silchester) and Venta (later Winchester) were all substantial urban centres. Clearly even before the coming of the Belgae the Lowlands of the Iron Age were undergoing change.

During the first century BC the most striking developments occurred in the Thames valley and its environs. Here there was a shift away from an earlier concern with settlement on hill-top sites, such as those at Wheathampstead (Herts.) and Bigbury (Kent), towards larger urban units on the plains of which Verulamium, Camulodunum and Durovernum Cantiacorum (Canterbury) were the most important. This was more than a geographical decision. These towns were in effect the capitals of powerful new kingdoms, controlling a wider area than the traditional tribal organisation. Though the details are not clear it would seem that the Trinovantes and the Catuvellauni formed a confederacy under a single king, Cunobelinus (the Cymbeline of Shakespeare). The Romans were able to make good use of the resentment which this monarchy aroused, to make alliances with the southern Atrebates, the Cantiaci (of Kent), the Iceni and the Dobunni, when they invaded Britain after Cunobelinus' death (he died in AD 41).

Other signs testify to the importance of the changes which were taking place in the south-east at this time. Perhaps the most important of these was the widespread use of coins. The survival of coins in quantity indicates the existence of a cash market and a certain level of numeracy and literacy, at least among some segments of the population. Coins bearing the image of the king bear witness to settled political conditions. All the signs are that the societies of the south-east were developing economic ties with Rome. Indirect Romanisation had already begun.

In sharp contrast with all this, the political organisation of the Highland Zone (or the Irish Sea Province as we may prefer to call it) remained at

a more local level. Hill-forts in this area were both smaller and fewer in number, less than a hundred as against the several hundreds of south-east England. The characteristic unit of the area seems to have been the enclosed family homestead, the so-called ring-fort. In Ireland and elsewhere in the Highland Zone, 30,000 of these ring-forts have survived, and their existence, together with the relative absence of hill-forts, suggests that it was possible, as a consequence perhaps of a relatively static population, for small-scale political units to enjoy substantial independence. Warfare was probably a local affair. Tribal kingdoms existed (Irish *tuatha*) but the powers of the kings were limited. The large number of kingdoms, compared with the Lowland Zone, also suggests that they were small in size. The complete absence of coinage and of urban concentrations is another pointer in the same direction. What appear to be at first sight large hill-forts at Tara, Emain Macha (the Armagh of today) and Dun Ailinne turn out on closer inspection to be ritual sites, built during the Bronze Age and later probably used for annual assemblies.

There can be little doubt that this broad social and economic contrast between Lowland and Highland Zones was also reflected in culture. An obvious next step, therefore, would be to consider the extent to which such matters as law, religion and general problems of 'meaning and value' differed from one Zone to another. The question, however, is easier to ask than to answer, at least for the Lowland Zone. The Roman Conquest, later to be followed by large-scale Anglo-Saxon colonisation, obliterated almost all traces of Celtic cultures in the south and east of England. In contrast, a great deal survived for Ireland. Thus we are in the paradoxical position of knowing more about the 'traditional' era of the Celtic world than about its 'modernising' sector.

Our knowledge of early Irish society derives largely from the evidence of the Brehon Laws first committed to writing in the sixth or seventh century AD but undoubtedly, thanks to the conservatism of the jurists, casting light upon some social assumptions of pre-Christian times. Professor Binchy, the editor of the laws, has characterised this society as 'tribal, rural, hierarchical and familiar'. Hence, it may be seen as contrasting with the monarchical and relatively urbanised societies of the Lowland Zone (though Binchy's views are now under challenge).

Within the context of the British Isles, the relatively traditional character of Celtic societies in Ireland is suggested by several features. They were, in the first place, oral cultures. The localised and static character of these societies is also implied in the importance which was attached to kinship. Power and prestige rested with the kinship group, *derbfine* (*fine* being the term for family). This did not mean that ownership of land was communal. It seems clear that the actual cultivation and ownership of the land rested with individual nuclear families.

The localised character of these societies suggests that a sense of national identity was lacking. Hence the use of the word 'Irish' in reference to this period, though convenient, may be misleading. (The same difficulty will appear later in references to Anglo-Saxon England.) The largest political unit at this period was the tribe (*tuath*) under its king (*rí*). The earliest political terms refer to tribal units, e.g. the Ciarraige (the people of Kerry) or the Muscraige (the people of Muskerry). There were tribal kings with limited powers, but in general the structure of these societies was aristocratic rather than monarchical.

Within the individual kinship groups there was, no doubt, a rough-and-ready equality, tempered by deference to age and seniority. But kinship groups themselves were not equal. The laws indicate the existence of different grades or *gráda* (perhaps 'castes' might be a more appropriate term) each with its own standard of compensation in the case of injury. The basis for differentiation was the assumption that priestly and warrior kinship groups were superior to the farming groups. By this time, a 'middle class' of smiths and leeches (medicine men) had managed to infiltrate the social hierarchy, their claim being legitimised on the basis of the craft having allegedly been founded by a particular god.

Aristocratic assumptions may also be seen in the prestige associated with the owning of cattle. It is often, and wrongly, assumed that Irish society rested upon cattle raising to the exclusion of arable farming. There is no doubt that arable farming was practised, but the evidence of the laws and other sources indicates that cattle raising was regarded as a superior form of social activity. Wealth was reckoned in herds of cattle, not acreage. Cattle raids were seen as an appropriate activity for the young nobility of a kingdom. In quasi-feudal arrangements which developed between wealthy patrons and needy clients, grants of 'fiefs' involved cattle not land. The unit of exchange in society was the *sét,* a unit estimated as being equivalent to one heifer. The ritual division of the year into two halves derived from the regular movement of cattle to winter and summer pasture. Bull symbolism also plays a large part in the Ulster epic *Táin Bó Cuailgne*. All these details suggest the cultural dominance of a cattle-raising aristocracy which relegated arable farming to lower social status.

These societies were not localised in any absolute sense. At the level of the elite groups of druids and warriors there seems to have been a common culture. It is easy to overstress the importance of this, however. Most of the gods and goddesses of Ireland were extremely localised personages with a local clientele, as the early Christian saints were to be several centuries later. Trade was confined to annual fairs within each kingdom. The pattern of settlement, based as it was upon isolated 'ringforts' rather than nucleated settlements, also indicates heavily localised societies. Behind the apparent unity of the Brehon Laws, Professor Binchy

has detected the existence of local codes. In the fourth century AD a considerable degree of political change occurred leading to the formation of several large kingdoms. During this earlier, pre-fourth-century period, however, there seems little doubt that small-scale societies were typical of Ireland, and of the Highland Zone generally.

There was, however, some social change. Kinship groups may have been the norm but the rise of relationships based upon clientage shows that some form of feudal relationship might exist between individuals. Thanks to the researches of Professor Binchy, it is possible also to discern a shift from earlier legal assumptions involving the sanction of taboos to a social world in which the law was enforced by kinship groups or by a powerful patron or king. The earliest level of thinking survived in such practices as *troscad* in which litigants fasted, possibly unto death, in order to bring pressure to bear upon the offending party. Such fasting was probably regarded as a magico-religious activity, capable of transferring the physical suffering of the faster to the person being 'fasted against'. By a later period *troscad* seems to have become largely obsolete as a legal remedy though it was still apparently an option open to the weak and powerless who lacked the backing of patrons or kin. If what we have said about the localised character of these societies is correct, it may also be expected that, within Ireland itself, some areas would be more traditional than others, the practice of *troscad* being a case in point.

The only other substantial body of 'Celtic' law about which something is known derives from the area now known as 'Wales', though there were presumably analogous legal systems operating throughout the rest of the British Isles. Welsh 'tribal' societies came into direct contact with Rome and there are good reasons for thinking that the legal practice of South Wales, within the orbit of the Roman military base at Caerleon (near Newport, Gwent) was influenced by Roman codes. Elsewhere in Wales pre-Roman social structures seem to have survived to influence assumptions about land-holding. In Welsh local cultures, as in Ireland, specific tracts of land were regarded as belonging to aristocratic kinship groups and hence inalienable by individuals. These assumptions prevailed into the sixteenth century and beyond. Welsh society in the pre-Roman period, as later, was heavily pastoral and, like Ireland, organised around a transhumance pattern of summer and winter grazing. Elsewhere in the Highland Zone we may assume the existence of an 'Irish-Welsh' style of social structure reflected in law, religion and general culture.

It is regrettable that no equivalent sources of evidence exist for the Lowland Zone. Even for tribal names we have only Latinised equivalents. If such sources had survived, we might expect them to reflect in some way the central position occupied by agriculture, the growing importance of trade and the extensive power enjoyed by such kings as Cunobelinus.

Figure 4. *Hill-fort at Moel-y-Gaer*
A hill-fort at Moel-y-Gaer (Denbighshire) set in the Welsh hills. Under
Roman occupation, this part of Britain was controlled from Chester.
Hill-forts such as Maiden Castle (Dorset) were very much a feature of
pre-Roman Britain.

Warfare, the consequence of invasion as well as of competition for land,
was probably more prominent in Lowland culture. All this is a matter for
speculation. What seems certain is that the 'Celtic' social arrangements
revealed by the medieval Irish and Welsh evidence were more traditional
in character than the equally 'Celtic' societies of southern and eastern
Britain.

The British Isles, on the eve of the Roman invasions, thus present
a broad contrast between the urbanised, monarchical societies of the
south and east and the rural, tribal and aristocratic societies of Highland

Britain and Ireland. For Lowland Britain, the Roman invasion was the latest in a series which had subjected that area to violent change over several centuries. Even before the Romans arrived, the political ambitions of individual kingdoms had led to shifts in the balance of power in the south-east. For some hard-pressed groups, such as the Regni (of what is now West Sussex), the Romans were almost certainly a lesser evil. Perhaps they anticipated that the invasion of Claudius in AD 43 would be similar to those made by Julius Caesar in 55 and 54 BC, raids in force leaving Rome's allies in possession of the field. If so, they were wrong. On this occasion the Romans arrived with the intention of staying permanently. So powerful was their impact that it is only by a great effort of the imagination that we see the need to go beyond the lasting monuments of Roman rule to the scattered relics of the Celtic societies which everywhere in Britain preceded it.

Postscript

This is perhaps the appropriate point to mention the contemporary debate about the term 'Celtic'. The most accessible introduction to this controversial topic is Professor Joep Leersen's excellent essay in Terence Brown, ed., *Celticism* (Amsterdam, 1996), pp. 1–20. Malcolm Chapman's *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth* (Basingstoke, 1992) is essential reading.

2   The impact of Rome on the British Isles

The tribal societies of southern Britain, already in direct contact with Rome, would have found it difficult to avoid being drawn into a system of 'informal imperialism'. The social and economic consequences of this can only be guessed at, but clearly the expansion of trade and cash-crops together with the spread of literacy would have led to changes in social structure, modifying without necessarily destroying traditional institutions. 'Modernisation', as we have seen, was in some respects well under way. In the event, however, the Romans decided upon a course of conquest and colonisation which led to the total destruction of the Celtic societies of the south.

What was the overall effect of this upon the British Isles? The North Sea Province underwent a social and cultural revolution. South of a line between Lincoln and Lyme Bay, the various Celtic kingdoms lost their independence and were incorporated within an imperial administrative framework. British Celtic language, religion, law and social institutions totally lost their elite status and henceforth were to bear the stigmas of the conquered. The southern Lowlands forming a military province were the most Romanised section of Britain. North and west, a military zone existed over which the policy of Rome was to exercise military control rather than to administer as a civil province.

English historians of the Roman Conquest have seen it, on the whole, through the eyes of the victors, an understandable attitude in a society with its own strong imperial traditions. From the Renaissance onwards, indeed, the Roman model has been looked upon as one which the English should copy. Not surprisingly, English accounts of Roman Britain, even the most recent, give the Romans the benefit of the doubt. We are assured, for example, that the Romans brought 'firm government' (S. S. Frere, *Britannia* (1967), p. 370). They are seen as having 'put Britain on her feet once more and restored her self-respect' (p. 111) and inaugurating 'a new era in the province with far-reaching advances both in the military sphere and in that of cultural development' (p. 115). We are told that 'the early third century was a period of social advance and that the settlement of

The Routes by which the Concepts
of LaTène Art Reached Britain & Ireland

Early La Tène
core zone

Marne

Moselle

0   200 km

Map 1. 'The Routes by which the concepts of La Tène Art Reached Britain and Ireland'.

Roman veterans near Hadrian's Wall resulted in a much greater community of sentiment between the garrisons and the local tribesmen' (p. 214). In the more recent Oxford History (P. Salway, *Roman Britain* (1981)), similar judgements are made. Rome, it is said, imposed relative peace by preventing inter-communal warfare. 'The very presence of a large army and civil establishment and other attractions which the new society held for local leaders cannot have left the humblest family untouched'

(p. 236). The Romans, another scholar tells us, aimed to unite Britain with an economy and a culture superior to anything previously known there. For the first time the whole country was united under one government, made possible by a splendid road system. The Roman Conquest is seen as creating a new situation tending to peace and order which greatly stimulated rural development.

The problem with such judgements is that they tell the story from the viewpoint of the coloniser. There were, clearly, other interpretations of events, even though we may never discover them. The work of E. M. Forster or Joseph Conrad (or even, in the late twentieth century, of Thomas Keneally in his sensitive study of the Australian aboriginals, *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith*) is enough to justify the placing of a question-mark against one-dimensional accounts of the Roman Conquest of Britain. What is clear about the Roman invasion of Britain is that it imposed one culture upon another. What is unclear is the extent to which the colonised inhabitants themselves came to welcome this as 'modernisation'; and how far we ourselves are entitled to make the judgement that the Conquest was 'all for the best'. The overwhelming weight of the evidence, in the shape of inscriptions, pottery and buildings predisposes us to make a judgement in favour of the Romans. On the other hand, the survival of such objects as the Battersea Shield and of later Irish works of art, influenced by La Tène traditions, is a reminder that Roman-style modernisation involved loss as well as gain. Recent excavations made at Ferrybridge, Yorkshire suggest that 'a burial grave venerated for centuries may have been the last rallying point for Britons facing the prospect of Roman colonization' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 10 March 2005).

As we have seen, the Celtic societies of Britain were by no means wholly traditional in character on the eve of the Roman Conquest. Social change, at least in the south, was taking place in the direction of larger political units, urbanisation and a wider market economy. The thrust towards 'modernisation' was greatly accelerated, however, after the Claudian invasion of AD 43. By the end of the first century AD the tribal monarchies of southern Britain had given way to one in which power rested with a literate bureaucracy, ruling according to the standards of a cosmopolitan empire, from urban centres which were linked by a centralised road system.

The key instrument in bringing about the radical changes which transformed much of Britain was the Roman army. The role played by the army in the initial phases of the occupation was inevitable. What was unexpected was the prolonged nature of the military occupation. Control of the Lowlands proved to be relatively easy. The Highlands, however, were never completely subdued and even maintaining a Roman presence

there involved an inordinate amount of expenditure. Unrest among the Brigantes of the Highland Zone (Yorkshire and the Pennines) drew the Roman army into a never-ending series of campaigns. What the government originally envisaged as a buffer zone turned into a dangerous frontier area. The construction of Hadrian's Wall, with all the diversion of resources which this involved, was a clear admission of the seriousness of the problem. Britain in fact demanded a larger outlay of military resources than any other province within the empire.

In such a situation, in which the army played a key role in decision-making, 'modernisation' took on a military colouring. Military decisions lay behind the establishment of garrison towns at Exeter and Lincoln with a military road, the Fosse Way, linking them. More such decisions lay behind the foundation of York and Caerleon as the main military centres of the Highland Zone. Most urban foundations in Roman Britain had a military origin. Some such as Lincoln or Colchester were colonies of army veterans. Even Bath, with its warm springs, catered largely for the needs of army officers, on leave or in retirement. Roman towns, true to their military origins, resembled barrack-like blocks in their regularity of pattern.

The army was not an end in itself, however. It formed part, but the most essential part, of a wider colonial society. Britain was a Roman colony, run for the benefit of the empire and its representatives. It is this undoubted fact which makes such judgements as 'putting Britain on her feet' so wide of the mark. Rome modernised the various tribal societies of Britain with the intention of exploiting its resources and raw materials. A centralised colonial economy replaced the various local economies of tribal society.

Within the new order the army was by far the most important single market. Its needs for a constant supply of corn, iron, leather, wine and pottery led to the mobilisation of a large labour force. The army was also responsible for the exploitation of silver mines, an imperial monopoly. The 'splendid' road system also required a plentiful supply of stone. All this was achieved not by the payment of wages but by the imposition of slavery combined with the 'pressing' of local labour. Convict labour was used in the mines and, in some cases, labourers were kept underground. The traditional status system resting upon membership of kinship groups was replaced by one in which the army was at the top of the social hierarchy with a largely unfree labour force constituting its base. Slavery existed in the tribal societies of the pre-Roman period but there was a clear difference between that situation and one in which slavery was a central institution.

There is little direct evidence about the transference of a colonial surplus abroad to the continental empire. The existence of an imperial

Figure 5. *Portchester Castle (Hampshire)*
Portchester Castle, near Portsmouth, was originally one of a number of
coastal forts constructed in the late 3rd century by the Romans against
seaborne attacks. Similar forts, though less well preserved, also survive
on the east coast at Burgh Castle and Brancaster. A keep was added to
Portchester by Henry I and the castle remained in use for many centuries
afterwards.

bureaucracy, however, indicates that such a surplus existed, for other-
wise the civil servants would have had no *raison d'être*. The aim of the
bureaucracy was the collection of taxes. The officials responsible for tax
collection as well as for supplying the necessary quotas of forced labour
needed to maintain 'public works' were the *decuriones*. It was they who
supervised the collection of the *annona*, the compulsory levy of wheat
which was placed in a central state store before being distributed to the
army.

   In all of this, the demands of the Roman state were paramount. Army,
bureaucracy and towns formed parts of a wider imperial organisation. It
seems likely also that the Roman villas formed part of this structure. The
600 villas discovered so far were once thought to have been essentially
rural in character, but it now seems clear that they were located relatively
near urban centres. Far from being places of leisure or retirement, the

villas, or most of them, were units of agricultural production, akin to the hacienda of colonial Mexico, or the 'big houses' of eighteenth-century Ireland. The likelihood is that they were run by slave labour, though the evidence is not absolutely conclusive. At Hambledon (Bucks) the numerous remains of female infants suggest that infanticide was practised with a view to maintaining a largely male work force.

The nature of the evidence in Roman Britain means that we know far more about the colonists than about the colonised. Historians have concentrated their attention upon the task of working out the details of how the army was organised or the bureaucracy was run. It is only by placing Roman Britain within the wider context of the British Isles that we are reminded that these institutions rested upon a conquered Celtic-speaking population. Such was the power of Rome that Celtic culture was almost lost to sight in southern Britain. Only in the north and west and in Ireland, which the Romans did not attempt to conquer, may clear glimpses of alternative social arrangements be discerned.

The impact of the Roman empire upon the Highland Zone is difficult to gauge. Roman roads and the accompanying system of Roman forts tended to attract clusters of native settlements. Hadrian's Wall was also an economic magnet in its own right. Apart from these points of contact there is little reason to doubt that Celtic social institutions survived over much of what is now northern England. York, with its cosmopolitan population, must be seen as a garrison town in a largely Celtic 'Yorkshire'. The 'Jackson map' of Celtic river-names (see p. 44) offers further evidence of the survival of Celtic culture in what we now think of as England. Celtic religious beliefs undoubtedly survived and perhaps revived in the course of the fifth century or earlier as the Celtic temple in Lydney (Glos) suggests. Even in the Lowland Zone, excavation has revealed the existence of temples on Celtic sites. We may also assume the survival of 'native' law in many cases.

When due allowance has been made for the survival of Celtic culture, there still remains the factor of Roman power to be taken into consideration. In her work (*An Early Welsh Microcosm: Studies in the Llandaff Charters* (1978); *Wales in the Early Middle Ages* (1982)), Wendy Davies has suggested that over large areas of south Wales, Roman-style land law, based on the 'estate', survived for many centuries after the Roman withdrawal. Clearly, considerable 'Romanisation' had taken place in what was part of the Highland Zone. There is also the vexed question about the extent to which the Highland Zone had been Christianised by the fifth century AD. It was indeed this Church which produced Patrick, the Apostle to the Irish, and the first clearly recognisable individual personality in British history (more so than 'Arthur'). If Christianity is taken as an index

Figure 6. *Hadrian's Wall*
Hadrian's Wall is an impressive monument to the military power of the
Roman empire. Initially the Romans intended to conquer Scotland and
perhaps also Ireland but setbacks in England forced them to limit their
ambitions and withdraw further south to what we now call the Scottish
Borders. At one stage the Antonine Wall was also constructed stretching
from the Clyde to the Forth.

of Romanisation, the survival of Christian communities in the Highland
Zone after the Roman withdrawal is of considerable significance.

What was the position of Ireland during this period? Conventional
interpretations have tended to stress its total isolation. Recent reassess-
ment of the significance of such evidence as pottery, coinage and other
material suggests that this may be too rigid a view, at least for the northern
and eastern coasts of the island. Allowing for the fact that Irish raiders
brought back silver and coins as booty, there does seem to have been
some degree of peaceful contact during the first and second centuries AD
and again, after a long unexplained interval in the third century, in the
fourth and early fifth centuries. Irish material found in south Wales may
derive from colonies of an Irish tribe (the 'Deisi').

Of all Romanising influences, however, the most important was
undoubtedly Christianity. The coming of St Patrick to the north of Ireland
and of other missionaries (who may have preceded him) to the southern
half of the country is normally seen in exclusively religious terms as part
of the history of the Christian Church. In cultural terms, however, it
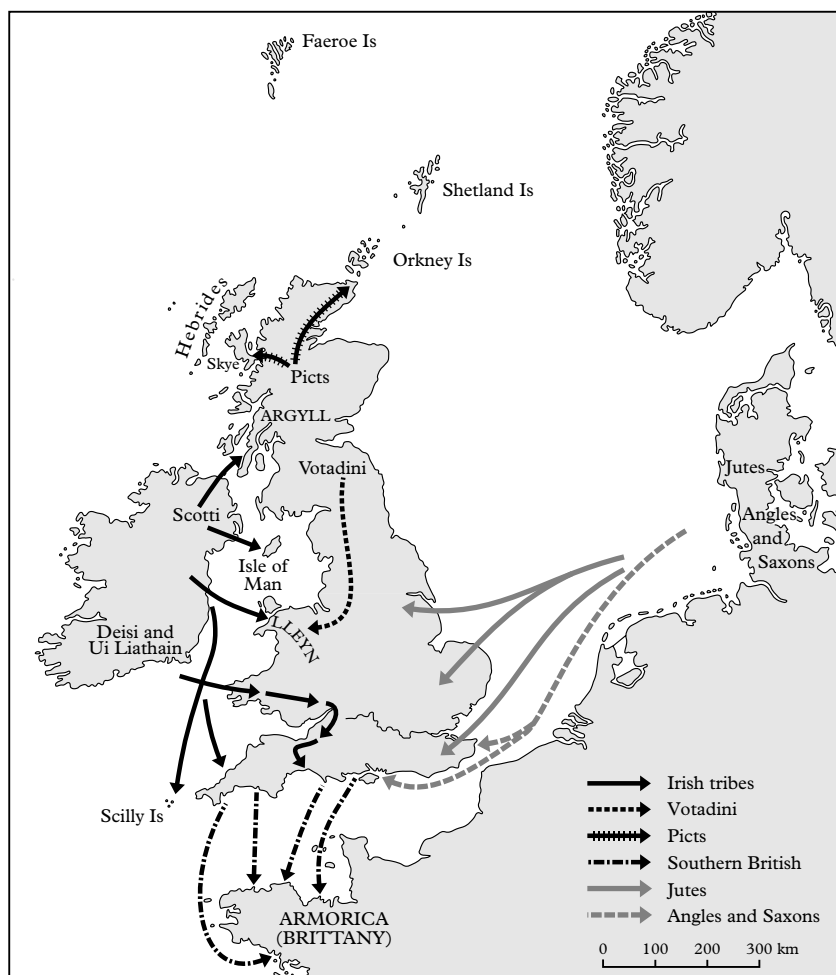
Map 2. The tribes of North Britain (names from Ptolemy) in the early Roman period.

marked the opening up of Ireland to the Latin language and to the values of Rome. During the fourth century AD Christianity had become the established religion of the empire and as a consequence had organised itself on the Roman administrative model. The Church was no longer a network of sects but an organisation made up of dioceses (the secular term for the imperial administrative unit) ruled by bishops in a monarchical system in which the Emperor as well as the Pope exercised a great deal of power. Latin was the sacred language of the Western Church and

its centre was Rome. The Christian missionaries to Ireland in the course of the fifth century were thus agents of Romanisation. The Church which St Patrick founded was linked with sub-Roman Britain and presumably run on Roman lines.

The religion of the druids was heavily embedded in an oral culture. If later practices of the poets (*filid*) are taken as a guide, candidates for the individual priesthood had to undertake a prolonged course of memorisation extending over many years. Secrecy was all-important and membership as a consequence seems to have been confined to certain kinship groups. Christianity, in contrast, was a religion of the book. It brought literacy in its wake, though no doubt of a restricted kind. The new culture was Latin in its orientation, though the view that Columbanus, the Irish pilgrim of the late sixth century, was familiar with the Latin classics seems to be unfounded.

The Christian Church, which had taken the imperial organisation as its model, was monarchical in structure. Its laws were seen as deriving from the authority of duly ordained rulers rather than from the local communities. In principle at least it aimed at uniformity. In doctrine also the Church aimed at orthodoxy, defined in as precise a manner as possible according to Greek philosophy. This too was in contrast with the loose polytheism of traditional societies within Ireland.

This process of Romanisation was by no means an instant success. Indeed, historians have tended to exaggerate the speed at which Christianity made headway in Ireland. The decline of the western empire in the fifth century also played its part in slowing down the rate of change. Many traditional aspects of Irish life survived for centuries to come. In spite of these qualifications, however, there is no doubt that the isolation of Ireland broke down during this period. During the fifth century, in an episode which is still obscure, Irish colonists from Ulster established themselves in Argyll. During the same period links were established across the Irish Sea between Ireland and Wales. So far as Wales is concerned, the story was to peter out inconclusively. In Scotland, however, the Irish, known by their Roman nickname of 'Scotti', came to exercise lasting influence, since it was from their kingdom of Dalriada that Christian missionaries eventually came to evangelise the Anglo-Saxons of Northumbria in the mid-seventh century.

Looked at in broad perspective, the British Isles c. AD 400 present a contrast between cultural areas. England south of a line from the Thames estuary to the Bristol Channel was heavily Romanised. Though few or no written sources have survived, physical testimony in the form of the remains of towns, forts and villas indicates that this part of Britain was very much part of the Roman empire. Here was a bureaucratic,
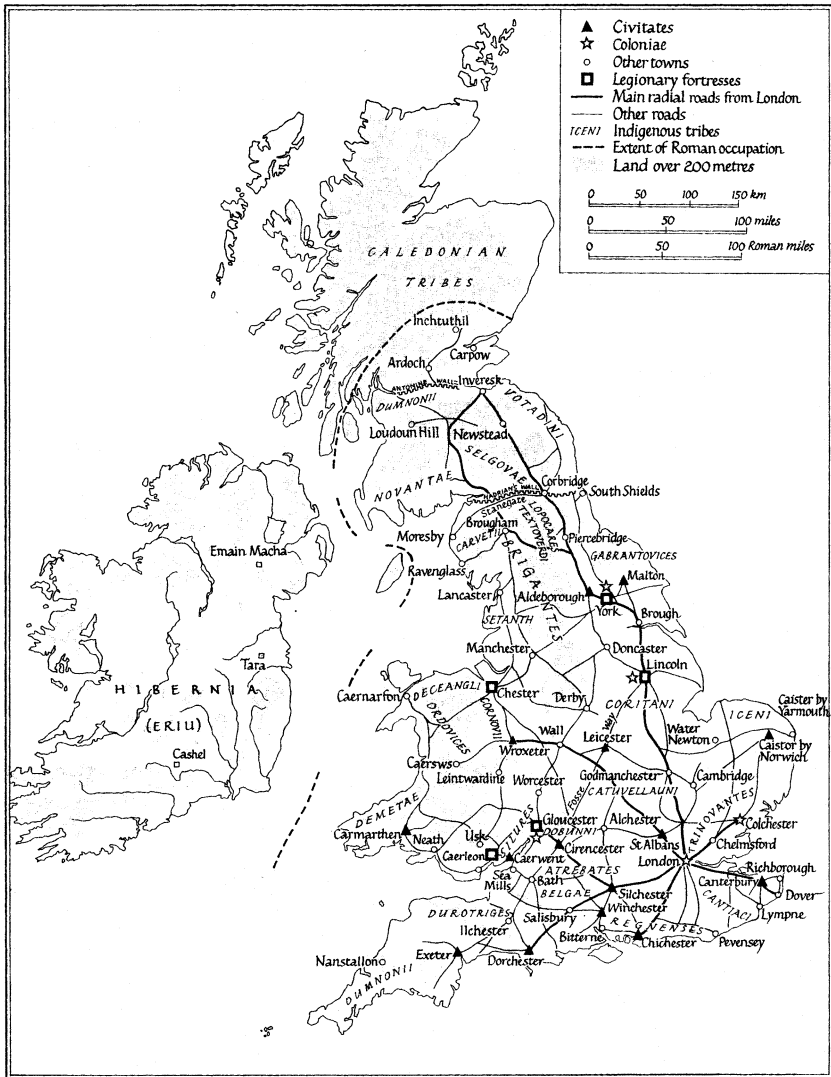
Map 3. Celts and Romans, early first to fifth centuries AD.

centralised administration, capable of responding to military and naval threats by the building of forts at strategic points along the coasts. Roman barracks indicate a rigidly standardised approach to the problems presented by military occupation. Law, we may assume, was administered according to the dictates of the imperial code, with its emphasis upon

Figure 7. *Caerwent*
Caerwent in what is now South Wales was a key site in the line of Roman forts stretching north to Chester. The Romans maintained a strong military presence in Wales, exemplified in the fort at Caernarfon on the coast, but they did not succeed in fully Romanising Wales as they did southern Britain.

private property. In the fourth century, the Christian Church, based upon the town and the diocese, administered by bishops, reflected in its unformity the outlook of the empire in which it found itself. Despite this Romanisation, the majority of the population, Professor Jackson tells us, almost certainly spoke British Celtic.

The second cultural area may be seen as stretching from the territory of the Votadini with its 'capital' at Traprain Law (near modern Edinburgh)

Map 4. Celts and Saxons, early fifth to late eighth centuries.

to the tribal kingdoms of Wales and Ireland. In this area societies were heavily localised in their outlook. Laws based upon the dominance of local kinship groups prevailed. The feud and the compensatory fine were the sanctions on which these local societies relied. We may also assume that perceptions of the past adopted by these cultures reflected their local

perspective. We are very far here from the universalist outlook of the Roman empire. In these cultures, the patronage of local aristocratic elites still prevailed. As suggested above, the influence of Christian missions brought these societies in Highland Britain and in Ireland into more direct contact with the Latin culture of the late Roman empire. For many, Latin became their sacred language. But the institutions of these societies, based upon what was seen as immemorial custom, could not be easily swept aside. Christian teaching, as the evidence of a later period suggests, probably remained a veneer in societies which still retained their own rites of passage and attitudes to kinship and, perhaps, human sacrifice.

Over much of the British Isles, the Celtic-speaking world survived the arrival and the departure of the Roman legions. The vitality of local oral cultures led to the invention or re-editing of origin legends, legal tracts and genealogies and narrative histories which were eventually committed to writing in an acceptable form by the monastic scribes of the early middle ages. These cultural traditions in due course gave rise to the fables of Arthur, Fionn MacCumhail and the Mabinogi. Those Celtic perceptions of the past which survived provided an alternative version of events which continued to exercise a powerful fascination in Wales, Ireland and Scotland and even in Norman England, thanks to the influence of Geoffrey of Monmouth.

Postscript

Chapter 2 offered a brief 'revisionist' interpretation of the impact of the Roman empire upon the British Isles, stressing the exploitative character rather than, as is the orthodox view, its role in 'civilising' the native inhabitants. (As I write, French historians are protesting about the attempt of the French state to impose a 'positive' view of French colonialism in state schools; *The Guardian*, 15 April 2005.) In support of my revisionist view, mention should have been made of the rebellion of Boudica, Queen of the Iceni, against Roman rule in AD 61. The violence of the rebellion was matched by the brutality of its suppression when, in the words of Tacitus, 'they (the Romans) made a desert and called it peace ('solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant', *De Agricola*).

The Iceni had accepted indirect Roman overlordship after the Claudian conquest of 43 AD but thirty years later turned to open resistance after the Roman authorities began to impose direct rule. In the course of this policy the Romans confiscated the estates of the Iceni aristocracy and imposed conscription upon their young men. In an ill-advised demonstration of their power, Boudicca, widow of the Iceni King, was flogged and her two daughters raped. Open rebellion against Roman rule

followed in which the Iceni were joined by their immediate neighbours the Trinovantes. The urban centres of Colchester, London and Verulamium were destroyed with great loss of life, amounting, so Tacitus tells us, to 70,000 people. In return, the repression of the rebellion by the Roman army led to even greater casualties among the Iceni population.

The Romans did not succeed in conquering the whole of the British Isles and may well have been deterred from doing so by the revolt of the Iceni and the Trinovantes. In due course, however, they established a form of partition eventually marked by Hadrian's Wall in the north and a frontier in the west running from Caerleon to Chester. Ireland was spared conquest by Rome although we know that the east coast of the island was in contact with the Roman world. Roman artifacts turn up regularly, most recently at Lambay Island near Dublin. Irish art also, for example, indicates the influence of Rome. Above all, the coming of Christianity to Ireland in the fifth century led to the introduction of Latin as the sacred language of the new faith. Established practices did not disappear overnight, however, despite later tales of St Patrick confronting the Druids at Easter. In particular, law tracts survived as part of an oral culture. These were written down in the seventh century, and throw unique light upon a non-Roman society, in which divorce and polygamy were established practices. In addition the epic account of the Cattle Raid of Cooley (*Táin Bó Cuailgne*) survived as part of the oldest vernacular literature in Europe. It is surely not eccentric to suggest that students of 'Britannia' should take such evidence into account when attempting to estimate the impact of the Roman Conquest upon what are too often dismissed as barbaric survivals. The writings of Professor Daniel Binchy, who was an expert in both Roman law and early Irish law, are instructive here.

3 The post-Roman centuries

Within the British Isles the period between the departure of the Romans (c. 400) and the coming of the Vikings (c. 800) was marked by the interaction of four distinct cultures, British, Pictish, Irish and Anglo-Saxon. At the beginning of the period British culture (the culture of the P-Celtic-speaking peoples) was dominant over most of the island of Britain south of the Forth. Much of this culture in what is now southern England and South Wales was heavily Romanised. Roman towns and general organisation survived well into the fifth century. Further north, for example in the territory of the Votadini between the Forth and the Tweed, the extent of Roman influence had been much less. North of the Forth, the culture of the Picts (originally known to the Romans first as Caledonii and then from the fourth century as Picti) was dominant. We know less about the Picts than any of the other three major cultures of the British Isles but place-names and other evidence indicate that there were two main groups, the southern Picts south of the Mounth and northern Picts north of the Mounth and in Shetland and Orkney. During the Roman centuries the Q-Celtic-speaking cultures of Ireland had been placed in a position of relative isolation, which was being broken down by the arrival of Christian missionaries from Britain and the continent. Germanic culture was the least important of all four since it was largely confined to eastern and southern Britain where auxiliaries of Teutonic origin had been introduced to serve as protective garrisons for towns – for example, York, Caistor, Cambridge, Leicester, Winchester and Dorchester-on-Thames.

By the end of the period a dramatic change had taken place. At the close of the eighth century, Anglo-Saxon colonists controlled an area stretching from the Forth to the south coast and as far east as a line stretching from the Dee to the Tamar. In an almost equally remarkable turn of events Irish culture had become dominant in the Western Isles of Scotland and in the area of western Scotland north of the Clyde. (The name of this Irish kingdom, 'Dalriada', is derived from the north-east Ulster homeland of the newcomers.) Irish culture also established itself in
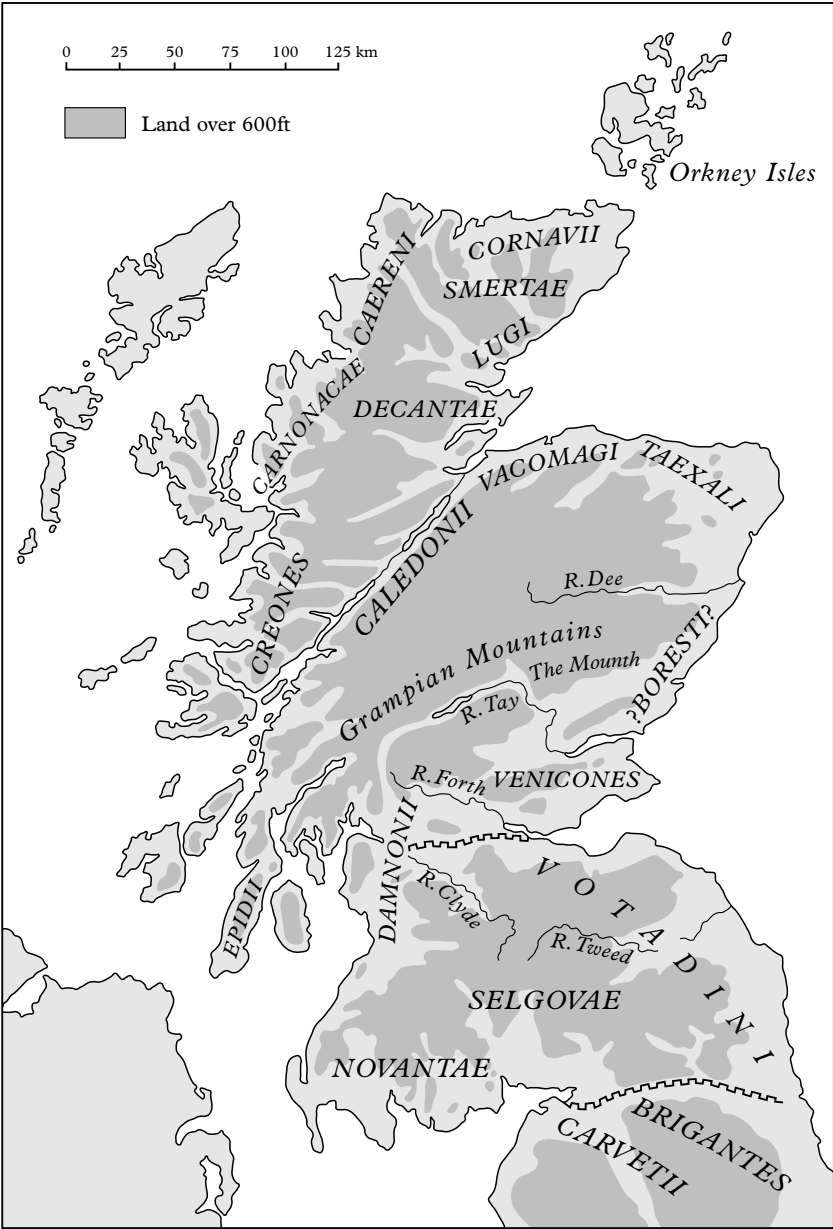
Map 5. Tribal migrations leading to the dismemberment of Roman Britain.

the east of what is now Scotland, among the Picts who were introduced to Christianity by Irish missionaries from Iona led by Colmcille (Columba). During this period Irish culture also penetrated, though transiently, into south Wales, where kings with a Gaelic pedigree ruled over Dyfed, and to the Isle of Man. Perhaps the most surprising development of all was the influence of Irish culture in the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria, which stretched from the Forth to the Humber. By 800 the cultural map of the British Isles had been completely transformed in ways that it would have been difficult to foresee 400 years earlier.

As the Anglo-Saxon and Irish cultures rose in importance during these centuries, the Pictish and British cultures declined. Pictish culture remains one of the great unsolved problems of insular history. The language of the Picts, known only from two dozen inscriptions, has not been deciphered and their general culture, known only from art and place-names, remains wrapped in obscurity. The fate of British culture (P-Celtic) is better known, but even here there are unanswered questions. By the end of this period British culture survived only in the kingdom of Strathclyde with its capital at Dumbarton, in the disputed area of Cumbria (a name which is the same as the Welsh *cymry*, 'fellow-countrymen' and Cymru, 'Wales'), in the several kingdoms of what the English called 'Wales' (meaning 'foreign') and in Cornwall, which may once have been part of the British kingdom of Dumnonia (it preserves the name of the British tribe, the Cornouii). The only area in which British culture expanded during this period was north-west France where much of the Armorican peninsula came to be called Brittany (Little Britain) and 'Breton', a variety of P-Celtic, was spoken. It was not until the ninth century, when 'Britannia (minor)' doubled in size, that the peninsula as a whole became Breton.

Historical interpretation of these centuries has been dominated by the work of the English monk Bede (673–735) who completed his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* in 731. As a consequence of the genius of Bede we are well acquainted with the Anglo-Saxon version of events. There is no rival version from the point of view of any of the other three cultures, although there are individual sources which go some way towards making up the deficiency. For the Britons there is the work of Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain,* written in the mid-sixth century and the anonymous *History of the Britons* written in the early ninth century. For the Irish, the sources include Adomnán's 'Life of Columba', as well as less tractable material such as annalistic chronicles, laws, genealogies and saints' Lives. For the Picts, there is almost nothing. The accessibility of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History,* available in paperback in English translation, has added to the influence of his viewpoint in modern times.
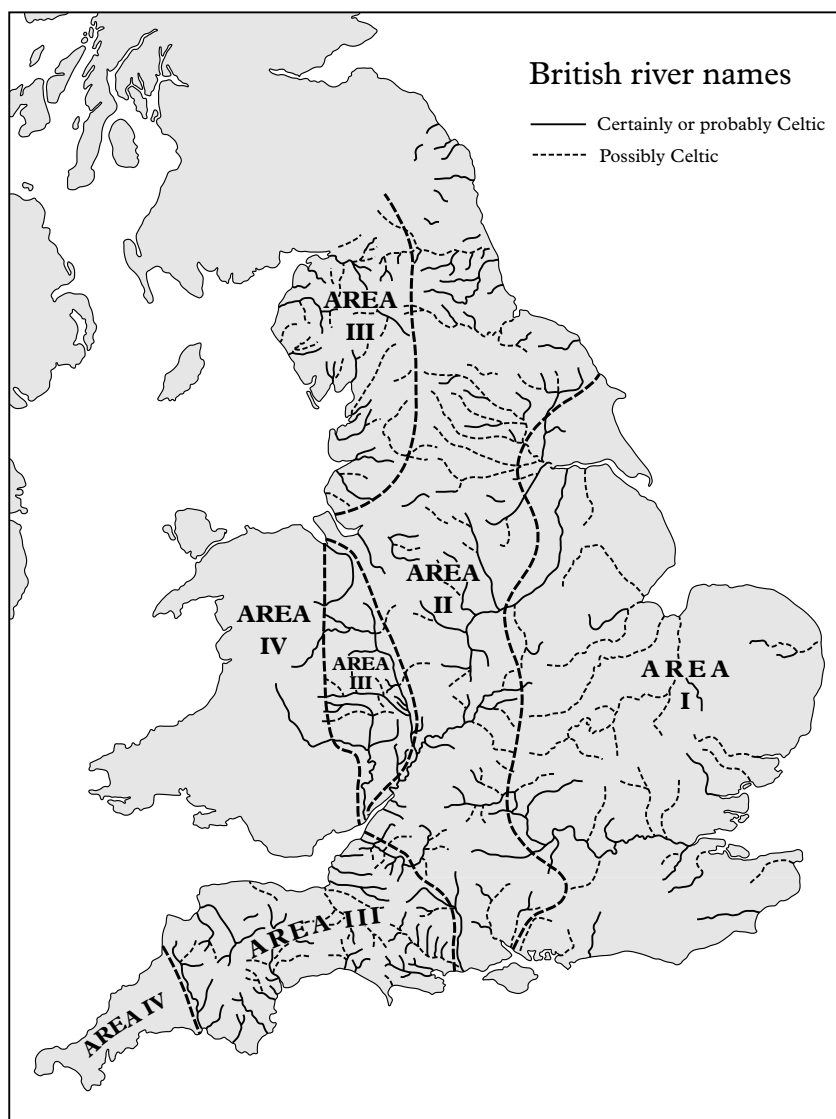
Map 6. British river names, the Celtic element.

Bede's theme is not the clash of cultures, though we may see this mirrored in his general account, but the conversion of the 'English' to Christianity. As a Christian historian of the events of the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries he was presented with the paradox that his own people, the Germanic newcomers, were pagan, while their victims, the Britons, were

Christian. Bede solved his problem by attributing the English victory to the working of Divine Providence. 'The fires kindled by the pagans proved to be God's just punishment of the sins of the nation, just as the fires once burned by the Chaldeans destroyed the walls and palaces of Jerusalem.' From this point of view the slaughter of 1,200 monks in the early seventh century by the Saxons was due to the fulfilment 'of Bishop Augustine's prophecy that the faithless Britons who had rejected the offer of eternal salvation would incur the punishment of temporal destruction'. There is no echo in Bede of the description of the pagan Saxons as a 'people more ferocious than even German ferocity'. In Bede's eyes, the English had become a nation chosen by God. As a consequence of this emphasis we may tend to overestimate the impact of Christianity upon Anglo-Saxon culture. In this regard the pagan burial of Sutton Hoo (c. 625–50) and the pagan aristocratic ideas expressed in the epic poem *Beowulf* may serve as a reminder that there was no 'instant Christianisation' of the Anglo-Saxons.

Of the relationships between the Anglo-Saxons and the three other cultures the evidence of Bede suggests that that with the Irish was, for a time, the most harmonious. Bede refers to the presence of 'many English nobles and lesser folk in Ireland who had left their own land during the episcopates of Bishops Finan and Colmán, either to pursue religious studies or to lead a life of stricter discipline . . . The Irish welcomed them kindly and, without asking for payment, provided them with books and instructors.' Bede also celebrates the role of Irish monks in the rebirth of Christianity in Northumbria, monks from Iona who with King Oswald's encouragement established themselves at Lindisfarne. (It is unfortunate that later devotion to St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne has tended to obliterate these early links with Ireland.) Aldfrith, king of Northumbria in the late seventh century (685–705), also had close links with Ireland. Three of the first four bishops of Mercia were either Irish or Irish-trained. Bede also mentions the work of an Irish missionary, Fursu (St Fursey), in East Anglia. These cultural links did not exclude political tension, however, when the interests of the Anglo-Saxons and the Gaels clashed. One crucial turning point in this respect was the battle of Degsastan in 603 when Aethelfrith of Northumbria defeated Aedhán MacGabhráin, king of Dalriada.

The art of the period also indicates the existence of close links between the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria and the Irish kingdoms in both northern Britain and in Ireland itself. The late seventh-century copy of the Gospels, known as the Book of Durrow, juxtaposes 'carpet-pages' of Germanic and Irish ornamentation. The Lindisfarne Gospels of the eighth century illustrate an intermingling of Irish, English and Mediterranean styles. Parts of the Ardagh Chalice, which is of Irish provenance,

Figure 8. *Emain Macha*
Emain Macha is a major hill-fort near Armagh in today's Northern
Ireland. It was the seat of the Kingdom of the Uí Néill and because of
the 'invented' links with St Patrick eventually became the primatial see of
the Christian Church in Ireland. Today Armagh boasts two cathedrals,
Catholic and Protestant, and retains its primacy in both churches, north
and south of the border.

were influenced by Germanic wood-carving techniques. The Book of
Kells itself (c. 800) may even be a product of this interaction between
Irish and Anglo-Saxon cultures. In his *History* Bede devotes a good deal
of attention to the clash which developed among Irish and English church-
men over the dating of Easter before the Synod of Whitby (664). Such
tensions undoubtedly existed but they highlight rather than obscure the
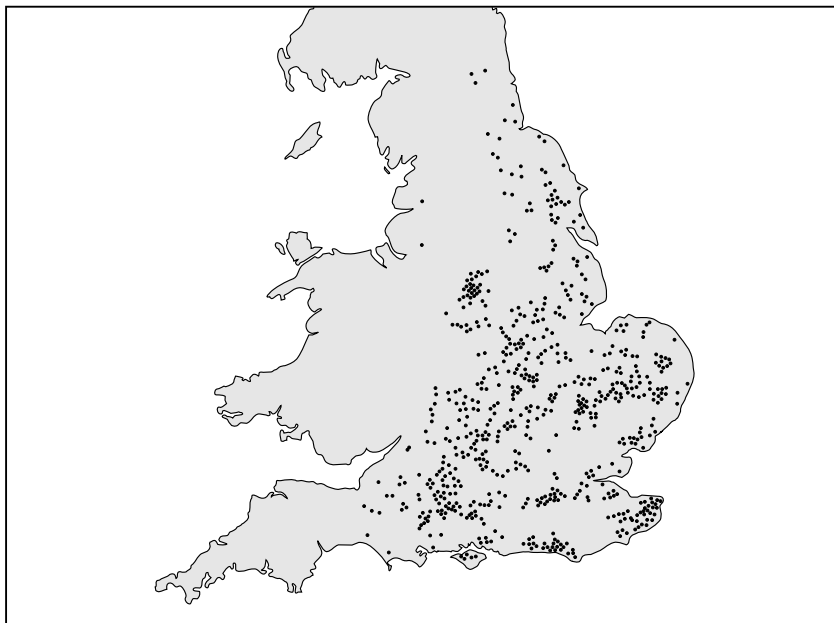
Map 7. The distribution of pagan Saxon cemeteries.

close relationship which developed between Ireland, 'British' Dalriada and Northumbria until the coming of the Vikings and which was symbolised in the prominence of the island-monastery of Iona.

In contrast, the relationship between the Anglo-Saxon and British cultures, between colonists and colonised, was permanently antagonistic. Bede believed that 'it is the habit of the Britons to despise the faith and religion of the English and not to cooperate with them in anything more than with the heathen'. Bishop Aldhelm complained that

beyond the bounds of the River Severn the priests of Dumnonia, taking excessive pride in the elegance of their own observance, hold our communion in such contempt that they will not deign to celebrate the sacred offices of prayer with us in church, nor in like measure will they share the dishes of the festive board with us at table.

Within the British community, forty days of penance were required before 'an English Christian' was accepted as a member. We must also assume that the massacre of monks, which Bede regarded as providential, appeared in a different light to the Britons, who presumably looked upon it as an act of barbarism. The most spectacular piece of evidence for the existence of prolonged and continuous hostility between Britons and

Saxons is Offa's Dyke, built during the eighth century and stretching from the Dee to the Severn estuaries. It was presumably the need to protect English settlements from British attack which explains the construction of an earthwork nearly 150 miles long, though other interpretations have been offered.

Bede provides us with the viewpoint of a historian for whom the crucial events of the seventh century were the conversion of kings and the miracles of saints. What is lacking in Bede is a sense of the steady process of colonisation which led to the almost total dominance of Anglo-Saxon culture in the Lowland Zone of Britain. Military conquest came first. By the end of the sixth century the Anglo-Saxons had seized the Romano-British centres of Gloucester, Bath and Cirencester, and had advanced to the estuary of the Severn. More permanent than military victory was the persistent advance of agrarian settlements. Modern scholarship has demonstrated how the progress of the west Saxons into the British territories of Devon and Somerset was based upon the creation of nuclear settlements, and possibly the extermination of the Celtic population. Further north, the so-called 'midlands system' of villages and open fields illustrates the same forces at work. The Anglo-Saxon conquest of the Lowland Zone rested upon the demographic preponderance which the village and its open-field agriculture made possible. Where this numerical superiority was lacking, the foundations of Anglo-Saxon society proved less secure. The kingdom of Northumbria, for example, despite its artistic achievements, failed to survive the onset of the Viking invasions. In contrast, the kingdom of Essex with a larger population was better placed to meet the challenge.

Anglo-Saxon society attributed a much greater importance to descent within the nuclear family and much less to the role of a wider kindred. The Britons created compound words to indicate second, third or even more distant cousins whereas the Anglo-Saxons were content with a single vague term. In Sir Frederick Pollock and F. W. Maitland's *History of English Law* (1898), Maitland commented long ago on the difficulty of establishing where kinship loyalties lay in Anglo-Saxon society, where descent in both male and female lines was acceptable, as compared with the stress upon patrilineal links among Britons and Irish.

The reason for this difference may well be sought in the colonial nature of Anglo-Saxon society. The colonists were ethnically mixed, from several Germanic cultures. In this new, mobile society, unlike the situation in more static societies, the protection afforded by the lord or the king seems to have been more important than that of the kindred. The 'right' to newly acquired land was more likely to be safeguarded by a king than by a possibly distant kindred. Not surprisingly, monarchical institutions

became more powerful in this type of society than in the lineage-based society of the Britons and the Irish. In Anglo-Saxon law, the development of *bookland*, land which was protected by a royal charter and which could theoretically be disposed of at will, indicated a profound difference from the assumption of the inalienability of land in 'Celtic' law. The importance of trade within Anglo-Saxon society, indicated by the existence of such ports as London and Southampton (Hamwih) and by the use of coinage, may also be related to a more fluid social structure in which trading was a socially acceptable activity. It was not until the Viking period that coins made their appearance in Ireland.

Bede wrote of the 'English People' and it has been convenient so far to refer to Anglo-Saxon culture as if it were a single entity. In fact, however, sharp differences seem to have existed between one group and another. The most obvious difference was that between the smaller, older kingdoms of the east and south coasts (Lindsey, East Anglia, Essex, Kent and Sussex), and the newer, more powerful expanding kingdoms of the north, the midlands and south-west (Northumbria, Mercia and Wessex). Historians have noted a contrast in eleventh-century social structure between the two areas, with slavery being a more prominent feature in the west. Conquest seems to be the most likely explanation of this phenomenon, since, among the Anglo-Saxons, the word 'wealh' could mean either 'Welshman' or 'slave'. The task of establishing a frontier with the British kingdoms to the west was clearly a perennial problem, which the Mercians attempted to meet by building Offa's Dyke. As suggested earlier, the challenge presented by the need to protect newly colonised territories may have led to a greater emphasis upon royal power in Mercia and Wessex than had been the case in the east.

In sharp contrast to the advances made by the Anglo-Saxons, the history of British culture during this period was one of catastrophic decline. By the eighth century much of what had been British territory was securely part of the various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. P-Celtic culture survived only in widely separated units along the west coast in the kingdom of Strathclyde, the kingdoms of 'Wales', in Cornwall and in Brittany. It was the loss of the British kingdoms of what became northern England, symbolised in the use of the term 'Gwyr y Gogledd' (the 'Men of the North'), which seems to have had the greatest impact upon British consciousness. The heroic Celtic tale *The Gododdin* told the story of the defeat by the Anglo-Saxons of a group of northern warriors linked to the Votadini (with their capital at Traprain Law) at Catterick. So complete was the overthrow of Celtic culture in northern Britain that this epic survived only in Wales. Thus later Welsh genealogical tracts of the thirteenth century attempted to establish links with northern British dynasties of the

sixth century. Poems written in Powys in the mid-ninth century looked back with bitterness to the defeats of an earlier period in the north. The figure of Tristan (Drystan), like other personages in Arthurian romance, seems to emerge from a northern background. Even though we lack the precision of dates and events to be found in Bede it seems clear that the fragmented British cultures in the west preserved the memory of an earlier period when British kingdoms existed in what became the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria. The only large exception to this story of decline was the survival of the kingdom of Strathclyde whose rulers won decisive victories over the Irish of Dalriada in 642. The building of Offa's Dyke as a defensive frontier line by the Anglo-Saxons in the eighth century also suggests that British resistance in what later became the Welsh marches was far from over.

The 'cult' of Arthur may be mentioned in this context. It is not surprising that a culture in defeat should seek compensation in the story of a warrior who would return to drive the Anglo-Saxons into the sea. Such seems to have been the significance of Arthur for many Britons during this period. The actual historicity of Arthur is very much a matter for debate, indeed there is no evidence for his existence. Bede does not mention him though he does refer to a certain Ambrosius Aurelianus, a 'Roman' under whom the Britons won their first victory against the Saxons. Even if Arthur did not exist, there is no doubt that the myth of Arthur formed part of British historical consciousness during these centuries. There is a reference to Arthur in *The Gododdin*. The Welsh Triads also refer to Arthur. However, it was only in the twelfth century, thanks in part to Geoffrey of Monmouth's History, that stories about Arthur began to reach a wider audience until, ultimately, he became a figure of European romance. During this early period, however, the story of Arthur, along with that of *The Gododdin*, may be seen as providing us with an insight into British (i.e. P-Celtic) attitudes towards the past.

If the Anglo-Saxons were divided, so too were the Britons. Perhaps the most obvious of these divisions was that between the various kingdoms of what later became 'Wales'. Culturally, north and south Wales offered (and still offer) a contrast. The British kingdom of Gwynedd in north-west Wales looked to northern Britain for its origins. Bardic historians of this area linked its second ruling dynasty with a certain Cunedda who was said to have driven Irish intruders from that part of Britain. Place-names such as Lleyn which have an Irish origin, in this case Leinster, certainly indicate an Irish presence in north Wales at some time.

In view of these links it is not surprising that memories of former British kingdoms in northern Britain should have survived more vividly among the bards of Gwynedd than in south Wales. The cultural horizons of the
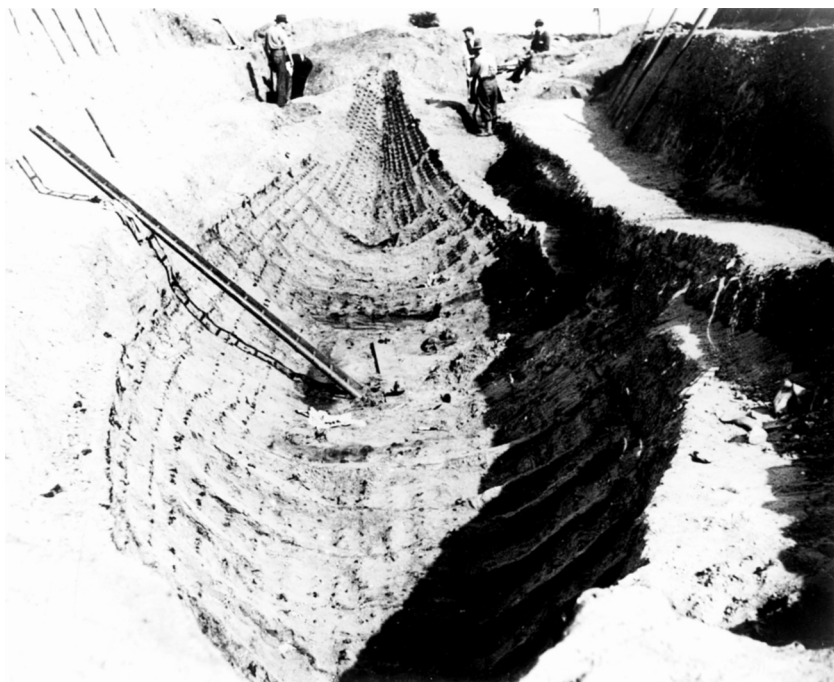
Figure 9. *The Sutton Hoo ship burial*
The ship burial at Sutton Hoo was almost certainly that of a mid-seventh-century East Anglian king. It was primarily pagan in character although there were some Christian elements. The Christianisation of the various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms was much slower than that of their counterparts, the Franks, on the other side of the English Channel. Historians tend to forget that Anglo-Saxon immigration into Britain was very much part of 'the Barbarian Invasions' of the western Roman empire.

kingdom of Powys in mid-Wales and of Gwent and Dyfed in the south seem to have been very different. In Powys the evidence of Eliseg's Pillar, set up in the mid-ninth century, suggests that the ruling dynasty looked back to one Gwrtheyrn as its founder. In the kingdom of Dyfed, place-names, Irish-style high crosses and ogham-stones suggest that the dynasty looked west across the Irish Sea rather than east or north. In the south-west, the kingdom of Gwent centred on Caerwent may well have looked back to the days of Rome. Lastly, on the other side of the Bristol Channel, the kingdom of Dumnonia, now reduced to Cornwall, should not be considered separately from south Wales since links across the Severn had always been close and it is probable that the British kingdoms of 'south

Wales' had more in common with their counterparts on the other side of the Bristol Channel than with the kingdoms of 'north Wales'. The alleged role of Glastonbury as a British holy place in Somerset before it had been taken over by the west Saxons deserves consideration in this context. The paradox of Arthur as a figure in Cornish culture also becomes more intelligible if the Severn is thought of as a unifying factor, linking the Britons of the south-west with their countrymen ('cymry') in what is now 'Wales'.

The third of our four cultures is that of Ireland, which enjoyed what is generally regarded as a 'Golden Age' during this period. An expansion of Irish culture into 'Scotland' and 'south Wales' took place, which may be seen as part of a general movement which took Irish missionaries led by Colmán (Latinised as Columbanus) into Western Europe. During the fifth century, under the impact of the mission of Patrick and others, Christianity had made considerable headway in Ireland, though there was no 'instant Christianisation'. The druids were eventually replaced by Christian clergy but other key institutions in Irish society remained unchanged. The practice of polygamy, for example, did not disappear for many centuries. Other native customs, such as that of cursing one's enemies, seem to have been taken over by Christian holy men. But there is no doubt that Christian teaching evoked a powerful response among some sections of the population. The missionaries whom Ireland produced during these centuries may be compared perhaps with the fundamentalist sects of our own day. They preached a simple message which we find embodied in the stone carvings of biblical scenes on the high crosses at Moone (Co. Kildare) and elsewhere.

In many ways, however, Ireland, though converted by St Patrick and though it influenced Britain through its own missionaries, remained remarkably unaffected by changes on the other side of the Irish Sea. The course of events might have worked out differently if Roman control of the neighbouring island had remained intact. A century after the departure of the Romans from Britain, however, the localised character of Irish society asserted itself. The monastic communities, which became typical of the Irish Church, were essentially local lineage groups in a religious setting, in which the abbot as the kinsman of the saint-founder of the monastery enjoyed the realities of power while the bishop played a secondary role. This pattern of 'coarbs' (i.e. 'heirs' of the saint) lasted in some areas of Ireland until the seventeenth century. It was this system, contrasting so sharply with the centralising ecclesiastical structure of Rome, which the Irish missionaries introduced into parts of Britain. Its strength lay in the establishment of strong local roots. The rulers of the new Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, however, expanding into Celtic-speaking

Figure 10. *The Ardagh Chalice*
The Ardagh Chalice, now in the National Museum of Ireland, is perhaps the greatest artistic treasure of the Irish Golden Age. Despite the unmistakeable Celtic provenance the ornamentation of the item was influenced by Germanic '*kerbschnitt*' wood carving. Thus in art, as elsewhere, due attention needs to be paid to a British Isles context as well as to European links.

areas, found episcopal organisation more appropriate as an instrument of government.

However, it would be a mistake to exaggerate the extent of Irish localism during this period. Pre-Christian Ireland, which (as we have seen) was 'tribal, rural, hierarchical and familiar', underwent considerable political change from the fifth century onwards. The fifth century saw the decline of the system of independent small kingdoms and the rise of two major over-kingdoms, that of the Uí Néill in the north and midlands and that of the Eoghanachta in the south. In the north, the expansion of the Uí Néill led to the decline first of the Laigin and ultimately of the Ulaid. The defeated parties found some compensation in the possibilities

opened up by expansion into north Britain (what later became known as Scotland). 'Old' and 'new' Dalriada remained linked politically until the seventh century but long after that date close cultural ties persisted. The men of Dalriada brought to Scotland the system of royal lineages which found expression in 'Cenel Loairn' and 'Cenel Gabhrain' (the lineages of Loarn and of Gabran) which in turn played a prominent part in the history of north Britain during these centuries. The memory of Dalriada and its legendary line of Celtic kings from Fergus I survived well into the modern period as a key element in establishing a Scottish national identity. The island of Iona also acted as a link with missionaries in Scotland and Northumbria.

The localism of Irish society did not remain unchanged during the centuries of Uí Néill ascendancy in the north of Ireland. When they had gained control of Armagh, the Uí Néill attempted to use its early associations with St Patrick as a means of gaining control of what had been independent monasteries. In this way the monastic centres at Clonard and Clonmacnoise fell under Uí Néill influence. The Uí Néill also sponsored new lives of St Patrick by Muirchú and Tírechán in which the life of the saint was to some extent rewritten perhaps to accord with the political ambitions of the dynasty. The Brehon Laws were also committed to writing, especially in the seventh century, despite a long tradition of secrecy practised by a profession which passed on its learning by oral transmission. There were also attempts to introduce a taxation system based upon the rights of Patrick over monastic houses which he was said to have founded. In all this the Uí Néill was not acting so very differently from its counterparts in Anglo-Saxon Britain, and, though we know much less about it, it seems likely that the Eoghanachta in southern Ireland was also building up an overlordship on similar lines. No more than in Britain, however, was there any sense of 'nation-building' during this period.

It remains to mention Pictish culture. Ideally we should like to have the literary evidence which is available for Anglo-Saxon, British and Irish cultures during the period. In the absence of this, the historian must be largely content with archaeological material and with references to the Picts in non-Pictish sources. As suggested earlier, it seems probable that Iona brought Christianity to the Picts, though references in Bede suggest that a certain Ninian, a north British bishop, may have done so already in the fifth century. Irish-style high crosses, to be found in the west of Scotland, the Isle of Man and south Wales, are absent from Pictland, which suggests that Irish influence may not have been as widespread here as it was in the west. However, there is no doubt about the influence of Christianity among the Picts as Pictish cross-slabs and such pieces of

Figure 11. *Dumbarton fort*
Dumbarton was the capital of the British Kingdom of Strathclyde,
stretching from the Clyde as far south as Cumbria and maintaining a
shadowy existence until the coming of the Normans. Dumbarton took
its name from the Gaelic 'fort of the Britons', given to it by its Q-Celtic
conquerors. Its British (P-Celtic) name was Ath Clut (Clyde Rock).
Dumbarton fell to the Vikings in 870. The feature in the foreground
was the original 'Dumbarton'.

metalwork as the Monymusk reliquary indicate. An important discov-
ery (1958) of a silver hoard on St Ninian's Isle, Shetland provides us
with an insight into the wealth of a northern Pictish chief (or perhaps an
ecclesiastic) on the eve of the Viking invasions. This and other pieces of
archaeological evidence indicate that Pictish craftsmen were in contact

with Anglo-Saxon as well as Irish culture. Literary evidence also refers to the Pictish King Naiton expressing his willingness to accept Northumbrian guidance about the Roman dating of Easter as well as asking for an architect to build a church on the 'Roman' model. In general, however, Pictish culture remains more of a historical 'problem' than a presence.

Throughout the 'post-Roman centuries', from the fifth to the eighth, the image of the late Roman empire exercised a continuing influence upon the cultures of the British Isles. The British kingdoms of western Britain were conscious of their links with Rome, which the myth of Arthur symbolised. In Ireland, the 'Romanising' tendencies of the Uí Néill have been noted. It was among the Anglo-Saxons, however, that Rome seems to have had most influence. The association of Christianity with the power of Rome probably made the acceptance of the new religion and the rejection of ancestral pieties easier. Literacy itself was associated with the Romans. King Aethelberht of Kent is said by Bede to have ordered his laws to be written down 'according to the manner of the Romans'. The dedication-inscription to Ecgfrith, king of Northumbria, is in Latin and takes its dating from the Roman Kalends. The church at Brixworth, which has been described as 'the most notable example of church building north of the Alps during the seventh century', takes its design from the Roman basilica. In the Sutton Hoo ship burial many of the key objects are of Roman inspiration. Not the least consequence of the Viking invasions was the weakening of the power of the Roman image. With the Vikings from the end of the eighth century, the 'post-Roman centuries' come to an end and a new period begins.

Postscript

In this chapter I attempted an overall view of the history of these islands during the so-called 'Dark Ages'. It was an ambitious, perhaps over-ambitious endeavour but its main point, based on Bede, about broad differences between what may be seen as four cultures, British, Saxon, Irish and Pictish, would seem to be acceptable. In discussing the Britons it is essential to avoid the over-confidence of such works as John Morris, *The Age of Arthur: A History of the British Isles from 350 to 650* (London, 1973). Professor David Dumville, in his devastating article 'Sub-Roman Britain: History and Legend' (*History* (1977), 72–104), makes it clear that the sources will not bear the interpretation which Morris placed on them. Dumville's comment about Arthur deserves quotation: 'I think we can dispose of him quite briefly. He owes his place in our history books to the "no smoke without fire" school of thought.' The significance of Arthur in fact lies in his role of symbolising British hostility towards the

Saxon invaders. Such hostility was also illustrated in the story of 'The Treason of the Long Knives' (Brad y Cyllyll Hirion) which tells how the Saxon leaders invited their British counterparts to a banquet and then, at a given signal, slaughtered them with 'Long Knives' (Morgan, 1984). On the English side the memory of Arthur was dismissed by the historian William of Malmesbury – 'This Arthur is the hero of many wild tales among the Britons even in our own day' (quoted in R.R.Davies, *The First English Empire* (Oxford, 2000), p. 1). Only later in the twelfth century, thanks to the influence of Geoffrey of Monmouth, did Arthur come to be assimilated into a broader English myth, which provided justification, or so it was believed, for English overlordship over these islands (Davies, *ibid.*, p. 1).

On the Saxon side during the fifth and sixth centuries there is a lack of literary material (hence the value of archaeological evidence such as that of the seventh-century ship burial at Sutton Hoo). In the absence of such evidence, Stubbs (1875) was forced to argue by inference from Tacitus' treatise on the German tribes c. 100AD (*De Germania*) and as a result his early chapters have been discredited. But Stubbs does make clear that the Saxons formed part of a wider pattern of barbarian invasions of Western Europe. Sutton Hoo is a reminder that eastern England was still largely pagan territory well after the arrival of St Augustine in 597.

Without Bede, historical pickings would be thin indeed. Fortunately, however, at least for English history, he was a scholar of remarkable talent amounting to genius who, in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (731), produced a version of events far superior to any single contemporary work in Irish or British. Thanks to Bede, the English found themselves provided with a Christian version of their past which obscured the realities of their barbaric origins and which linked them with Christian Rome rather than pagan Germany. But Bede's stress upon the existence of an English nation may have led us to exaggerate the degree of unity which existed in pre-Viking England.

Bad relations between the Britons and the Saxons (whom now, following Bede, we should call 'the English') continued into the eighth century and beyond. Offa's Dyke bears witness to this. John Gillingham also tells us that Bede, writing in 731, called a British king – a fellow Christian – a barbarian. He also reminds us that early west Saxon law codes treated Britons (whom they called 'Welsh' sc. foreigners) as second-class citizens (Grant and Stringer, *Uniting the Kingdom?* (1995, p. 56)). It is not surprising that of our four cultures it was the Irish who helped to convert the English to Christianity. Thus James Campbell reminds us that the Irishman Fursey preached the gospel in East Anglia c.635 (Campbell, 2000, p. 114).

The Ireland from which such figures as Fursey emerged was not nec-essarily the island of 'saints and scholars' of pious history. The practice of polygamy, for example, survived the coming of Christianity. Professor Daniel Binchy, in a brilliant article (Binchy, 1958), has shown how despite the coming of St Patrick (c.450) the Kingship at Tara remained pagan for several generations. Binchy was also able to prove that the story of Patrick confronting King Laoghaire at Tara in the fifth century could not have been true, although this did not prevent it from being related still as fact by the Irish bishops to Pope John Paul II when he visited Ireland in 1979.

By the seventh century, however, a rapprochement had taken place between Christian and secular learning and tribal sagas were incorpo-rated into a Christian chronological framework. The way was open for the rise of a national myth, the 'Book of Invasions' (Lebor Gabala), in which the Irish kings traced their descent to Mil (whose sons on leaving Spain settled in Ireland) and thence back to Gomer son of Noah. The leg-endary character of this story should not obscure the fact that the sources for early Irish history are much more plentiful than those available for Wales or England. It has been estimated, for example, that the Irish genealogies refer to 20,000 identifiable individuals compared to a few hundred for Anglo-Saxon genealogies. Work in this difficult terrain by a gifted generation of scholars has brought rich rewards which are not as well known outside Ireland as they should be (see O Croínín, 1995).

In the context of the history of these islands the cultures of the 'Dark Ages' left a lasting impact upon national identities. In the case of Ireland a figure from prehistory such as Cuchulain remains a potent symbol even today. The High Kingship of Tara still retains a shadowy aura. Above all St Patrick, a man of the fifth century, is still a vivid presence in Irish culture.

The influence of this period was also long felt in Scottish history where an elective 'ancient constitution' was traced back to Fergus, King of Dalriada, in the fourth century BC. This was, no doubt, a myth but it rested upon the undoubted fact of a substantial Irish presence in the west of Scotland. In the sixteenth century the humanist scholars Boéce and Buchanan continued to stress the significance of the Dalriada monar-chy and in the late eighteenth century James Macpherson discovered (or forged) the literary works of 'Ossian', a figure who came to be seen as the northern Homer. In the fifth century, however, 'Scotland' in the modern sense did not exist. Four ethnic groupings, Irish, British, Pictish and Saxon, still contended for supremacy or survival. It was not until the ninth century that a political unit resembling 'Scotland' began to emerge.

The general reader is fortunate in being able to turn to the contributions of a generation of gifted scholars, in particular David Dumville's *Histories and Pseudo-histories of the Insular Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 1990), Daibhi O Croínín's *Early Medieval Ireland 400–1200* (London, 1995) and James Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London, 2000). Donnchadh O Corráin's chapter, 'Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy: Recurrent Aetiologies' (in T. Nyberg *at al*, eds., *History and Heroic Tale* (1983), pp. 51–96) is most illuminating. Chapter I of Patrick Wormald's masterpiece, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century* (Oxford, 1999) helps to make a difficult field more accessible to non-specialists. Daniel Binchy always brought clarity to his topic (see Reading List below). One further point may be made. Our 'British Isles' focus should not blind us to the European dimension of their history, especially in the case of Ireland whose missionaries had a remarkable impact upon Western Europe during the centuries when England was still pagan, well before the heyday of Boniface (c.750) and later, Alcuin (c.800).

Much of the importance of this period for later generations lies in the 'gaelicisation' of the west of Scotland. How this occurred is still a matter for debate, as a recent article by David Dumville demonstrated (Dumville, 2002). Its lasting effects are a salutary reminder of the way in which Ireland and Britain have interacted over the centuries despite the efforts of some national historians who wish to keep them distinct.

It was also during this period that Anglo-Saxon newcomers established a permanent presence north of the Tweed. As we have seen, Scotland at this time, 500–800, was an unstable complex of distinctive and hostile ethnic groupings: British (sc. Welsh), 'Scottish' (sc. Gaelic), Anglo-Saxon and Pictish. To this mixture were soon to be added Viking elements. It was surprising indeed that a Scottish nation eventually emerged under the leadership of Robert Bruce (1274–1329).

4 The Vikings and the fall of the Old Order

During the early ninth century, the equilibrium which existed between the cultures of the British Isles was disturbed by the onset of a new, seaborne power, the Vikings. The first Viking raids took place in the last decade of the eighth century when Lindisfarne was sacked (793). From then on the peoples of the British Isles as a whole were subjected to increasing pressure. Thanks to their longships, a crucial invention, the Vikings were able to dominate for long periods much of the Irish Sea and the North Sea. A completely new situation was created, as a consequence of which Viking settlements were established along the coasts of Britain and Ireland as well as neighbouring islands including the Isle of Man, Shetland, Orkney and the Hebrides. Though their political power eventually declined, partly as a consequence of political divisions, the communities which they set up remained ethnically distinctive for centuries. With the coming of the Vikings a new period may be said to have begun in the history of the British Isles, one which marked a sharp breach with the past.

The term 'Viking' originated in a term for 'pirate', but, as with the Saxons earlier, piracy eventually gave way to colonisation. The Irish Sea from the Hebrides southwards was largely dominated by the Vikings, though it would be a mistake to assume that there was political unity among the various groups. (The Irish distinguished 'dark strangers' *dubhgaill*, from 'fair strangers' *fionngaill*, whence came 'Fingal'.) During the course of the ninth century, trading posts were established at Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Limerick. The Isle of Man became an important strategic centre. The North Sea also fell under Danish influence. The capital of Northumbria, York, was transformed into a major Viking entrepôt, rivalling Scandinavian Dublin in its importance. From the mid-ninth century (856) large-scale Danish colonisation took place along the east coast. In the English east midlands, large areas of Mercia were soon controlled from the five Danish boroughs of Lincoln, Leicester, Derby, Nottingham and Stamford, all of them accessible by river from the North Sea. In the Irish Sea area, a secondary expansion occurred in Cumbria and the Wirral, although in this case the settlers came from the Scandinavian colonies in

Map 8. The impact of the Vikings, late eighth to early eleventh centuries.

western 'Scotland' and the Western Isles. During much of the tenth century, struggles for power took place between various groups of Vikings. Hence came the spectacle in the tenth century of the Norse kings of Dublin attempting to gain control of the Danish kingdom of York, though ultimately without success.

Conventional interpretations, particularly of English history, tend to underplay the significance of the Vikings. Many text-books of English history assume the continuity of an Anglo-Saxon England from the fifth century to the Norman Conquest. The French historian Marc Bloch, however, looking at Western Europe as a whole, argued that the Viking invasions induced responses which led to revolutionary changes in social and political structures. Daniel Binchy also, in his study of Ireland during this period (in *Proceedings of the Dublin Congress of Celtic Studies* (1962)), has spoken of 'the Fall of the Old Order'. In the context of the British Isles, a view which stresses radical change rather than continuity makes the better sense. Both directly in their own actions, and indirectly in the responses which they evoked, the Vikings may be seen as agents of revolution rather than as the cause of a minor break in a general process of political evolution.

If we deal with eastern Britain first, the revolutionary effect of the Viking invasions is clear. The Vikings originally set up puppet-kings in Northumbria and Mercia, but in the first half of the tenth century these kingdoms ceased to exist. The Christian Church which these kings had supported also suffered severe blows. Politically, the result of this was to leave Bernicia, Northumbria north of the Tweed, isolated and exposed to attack from the north. The future of this area was to lie with the Gaelic-dominated 'Kingdom of Scots'. Further west, Anglo-Saxon settlements in Cumbria, made at the expense of the kingdom of Strathclyde, were submerged. In Deira (south Northumbria) and further south in Lindsey, East Anglia and Mercia, Danish settlers moved in in large numbers, often, it would appear, establishing themselves alongside the Anglo-Saxons. As the Celts had become second-class citizens in this part of Britain, so too in their turn did the Anglo-Saxons. The Anglo-Saxon elite, if we may go by the evidence of the graves, was a military aristocracy. The new social order was more broadly based upon farmers. Not surprisingly, the aristocratic artistic tradition of Northumbria was weakened though it did not perish entirely. Along the east coast of Britain 'Anglo-Saxon England' ceased to exist in any meaningful sense. The Christian literate culture of Alcuin of York linked to Rome and the Carolingian empire, was replaced by a pagan, oral culture, which looked to Denmark and Norway.

The new society which came into existence in this area during the ninth century was more market-orientated than the society which it replaced, though the contrast was not absolute. Anglo-Saxon coins (*sceattas*) testify to the existence of trade between London and the Rhineland during the eighth century. The port of Hamwih (near today's Southampton) enjoyed some prosperity. The trading inclination of the Vikings, however, was of a different order. York became an international trading centre, rivalled

Figure 12. *Commemoration stone from Lindisfarne*
Lindisfarne, a Celtic monastery on an island off the coast of Northumbria, was established by Aedan, a monk of Iona, who came at the invitation of King Oswald. Christianity in Northumbria was a mixture of Celtic and Roman traditions which came into conflict at the Synod of Whitby in 664. In a curious turn of events the remains of St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne were enshrined at Durham, where his Celtic connections were lost sight of. The scene depicted here commemorated the Viking raid which led to the evacuation of the monastery.

in the British Isles only by Dublin. Other substantial commercial centres rose along the east coast at Lincoln, Thetford and Norwich. London had a thriving community of Viking merchants. On the west coast, Bristol in due course became an important port specialising in trade with Ireland. Trade with the French coastal regions also increased.

In the early years of the Viking raids piracy and trade were inextricably intermingled. Their trade was piracy and piracy was their trade. The Cuerdale coin hoard of over 7,000 coins, including some Kufic *dirhams*, shows the 'trading' links which existed between the Scandinavian-controlled areas of England and the Baltic trading zone with its own

contacts with Russia. Another index of the commercial changes associated with the Danes is the sudden appearance in the mid-ninth century of excellent wheel-thrown pottery (confusingly termed 'Saxo-Norman' by archaeologists). The use of this pottery spread everywhere where the Danes had settled. The demand for it suggests the existence of a 'mass market' rather than a restricted aristocratic one such as existed in pre-Viking Northumbria. In contrast, pottery in Wessex remained largely hand-made, a sign of that kingdom's more conservative social structure. It was no accident that (on the evidence of the Domesday Book) the eastern half of Britain, now under Danish dominance, was wealthier and more heavily populated than other parts of England.

It was suggested above that even during the post-Roman centuries the eastern half of England enjoyed a less rigid manorial social structure than the midlands. The Vikings almost certainly added to the proportion of freemen. Maitland commented long ago on the higher proportion of *liberi homines* or 'sokemen' in the east in contrast with the villeinage characteristic of the mid-lands and West Country. Not all of the freemen need have been descended from Vikings but the existence of over 10,000 in Lincolnshire, 5,000 in Norfolk and nearly 2,000 in Leicestershire, areas of major Scandinavian settlement, is a strong argument for some correlation. The feudal tie of lord and vassal does not seem to have been characteristic of Viking society. The typical Viking, if we may speak of such a person, seems to have been a farmer in arms, not a warrior seeking to control unfree labour. Viking farmers had a tradition of carrying arms in their local assembly as the name *wapentake* indicates. Active participation in political decision-making was encouraged at regular meetings termed *things* (hence such place-names as Thingwall).

Local historians have noted how, even in the thirteenth century, well after the Norman Conquest, and when the trend towards manorial control was at its height, eastern Norfolk possessed a social structure which was unusually flexible and free. Partible inheritance was widespread and most villeins had already established the right to alienate land. Resort to the common-law courts by tenants was not uncommon in this part of England. It is also significant that after their military successes against the Vikings (c. 900) the Wessex monarchs did not succeed in establishing the 'hundred' and the 'tithing' in Scandinavian areas. In Wessex, each member of a hundred was obliged to belong to a tithing (a group of ten or twelve men) and to accept responsibility for the behaviour of fellow-members. The absence of such institutions in the Danelaw suggests the extent to which Viking society was less authoritarian than the rest of England.

The military revival of the west Saxon monarchy from the early tenth century onwards did not restore Anglo-Saxon cultural, political and social dominance north of the Humber. The royal itineraries of the Wessex kings, which are a good guide to the extent of their real power as opposed to a temporary 'showing of the flag', were largely confined to an area south of the Thames. For a long time to come, considerable differences existed between the Danelaw and the rest of England, not least in language, law, religion and art. The east was very much a distinctive society whose autonomy the west Saxon monarchy was forced to respect. The revival of Viking raids in the later tenth century and the establishment of Danish supremacy over all England during the reign of Cnut (1016–35) can have done little to reduce this sense of separateness. Even under the Normans, the Danelaw was to retain much of its own character.

The Scandinavian invasion of the east coast of Britain brought about the fall of the Old Order and the creation of a new society in its place. Had the colonising impetus of the Danes been maintained, 'England' might well have been transformed into a 'New Denmark'. For various reasons, including the shifting of interest to other areas and the divisions which existed among the Scandinavians, the conquest of the Anglo-Saxons was never completed. Indirectly, however, the challenge presented by the new-comers led to revolutionary changes in the south, where Wessex had managed to escape the fate of Northumbria and Mercia. Under a succession of able kings, Alfred (871–99), Edward the Elder (899–924), Aethelstan (924–39), Edmund (939–46), Eadred (946–55), Eadwig (955–9) and Edgar (959–75), Wessex achieved a remarkable period of dominance. The tenth century was very much the 'Age of Wessex'.

These successes were not achieved without paying a price. Wessex, and the areas which came under its control, became more centralised and military in character. For Mercia and East Anglia, indeed, 'liberation' by Wessex meant the exchange of one master for another. It is all too easy to ignore these internal cultural divisions in an interpretation which stresses the movement of history towards the making of the 'English nation'. In due course, despite the military successes of Wessex against the Danes, Mercia was to show itself restive under the west Saxon monarchy. During the earlier eleventh century, indeed, the earldom of Mercia enjoyed a good deal of autonomy.

The new monarchy, from Aethelstan onwards, represented itself as the instrument of the Divine Will, and, as a consequence, enjoyed a superior status over and above any opposition based upon 'tribal' considerations. Edgar in particular seems to have regarded himself as possessing quasi-priestly status. His well-staged coronation at Bath in 973 marks a new

point in the development of monarchical ideology. The officiating clergy asked Christ to 'anoint this king to his reign as you have anointed priests, kings, prophets and martyrs'. Somewhat earlier, Alfred had translated works of Gregory the Great and Boethius, probably with an ideological aim in view.

Before the tenth century, kingship was more in the nature of overlordship. Thus the taxation document of seventh-century Mercia, known as the *Tribal Hidage*, reveals the existence of distinctive 'tribal' groupings beneath the monarchical façade. In contrast, the new west Saxon monarchs, on the basis of their conquest of the Danelaw, in theory enjoyed the power of direct disposal of land which had formerly been 'tribal' territory. A large royal demesne and a reservoir of Church land at royal disposal formed a basis of royal power in the conquered areas. Royal charters provided legal backing for newcomers to these areas. Wessex, once military success had been achieved, absorbed (or attempted to absorb) the former kingdoms of Mercia, East Anglia, Essex, Sussex and Kent. This west Saxon expansion had been made possible by the Viking invasions.

If the Danes had created a society in which traders and farmers were preponderant, the west Saxon kings, building upon the demands of the situation, brought a military state into being. As modern research has shown, the administrative units of 'shire' and 'hundred', which were to be so much a part of English history, had a military rather than a civil function. The royal army (the 'fyrd') was not the popular folk-levy of nineteenth-century imagination but a quasi-feudal body bound to the king by the ties of vassalage. The royal boroughs which Alfred and his successors set up as part of their response to the Danes were essentially a system of fortified centres, military rather than commercial in character, and hence quite unlike the Danish towns of York, Lincoln and Norwich. The conquest of Danish Mercia also made possible the reorganisation of former tribal territories into Wessex-style 'shires', under ealdormen, who were not the civil officeholders, which the modern associations of the term (aldermen) might suggest, but primarily military governors. This was not a completely new departure for the kings of Wessex. In large measure it was an extension of the policy and practice employed in the subjection and colonisation of Devon, Somerset and Dorset at an earlier period, under Ine (d.c. 726). The military ambitions of the dynasty were eventually to lead them well beyond Anglo-Saxon territory – into Scotland; the year 973 was the high point, when Edgar is said to have been rowed down the river Dee by eight client kings.

If 'feudalism' is taken to mean the holding of land in return for military service, the new monarchy brought a feudal society into existence. The Danish threat created the need for a class of specialised warriors, whose

position rested upon a manorial system of unfree labour. Hence came the paradox that during the years of 'liberation' the status of the Anglo-Saxon peasantry seems to have declined even further towards servitude. In those areas which were under west Saxon control, 'tribal society' was replaced by 'seigniorial society'. The new shires which were created in west Mercia bore no relation to the traditional 'tribal' units of an earlier period. The document known as the *Burghal Hidage*, dating from the early tenth century, indicates the extent to which change had taken place since the earlier *Tribal Hidage*. The new shires were organised around urban centres under royal control and took their names from them (for example, Gloucestershire, Derbyshire) and not from their tribal affiliation as they did in Wessex proper (as in Somerset and Dorset). On the basis of these new centres and of associated smaller fortresses (*burgs*), what amounted to a west Saxon empire was created. As the *Burghal Hidage* makes clear, these military settlements rested upon compulsory levies of men and material assessed according to the unit known as the 'hide' (a family-size holding varying in extent with the area). Thus Winchester was assessed at 2,400 hides.

In this new seigniorial society, kinship ties, already weak, were giving way still further to feudal duties imposed from above. The process of weakening was carried still further as royal justice, administered by royal judges, began to assume a new importance. The change may be seen in the creation of artificial groups of ten or twelve men called 'tithings', which were made responsible for the behaviour of their members. Failure to observe the royal command was punished not by the penalties appropriate to a kinship group but by flogging by order of the king's representative. Law imposed from above was beginning to replace customary law based upon mutual interaction between groups.

The ecclesiastical aspects of the new monarchy especially illustrate the far-reaching character of the changes involved. The 'Tenth-Century Reformation' was a movement which introduced a new style of monasticism into Wessex, Mercia and East Anglia under royal auspices. The three leaders of this reform movement, Dunstan (d. 988), Aethelwold (d. 984) and Oswald (d. 992), all monk-bishops and all men of intellect and vigour, were closely associated with the royal court of Edgar (959–75). Their reforming criticisms were levelled at the married clergy, whom they termed 'lascivious clerks', and their reforms were aimed at reducing the power and influence of local kinship groups. With the backing of the king, they were able to establish well-endowed monasteries which owed little to local aristocratic support. It was during this period that over thirty monasteries were founded, some of them, such as Peterborough (966) and Ramsey (c. 971), in 'liberated' East Anglia, others in Mercia. The

most spectacular event associated with the 'Tenth-Century Reformation' was the replacement in 964 of the clergy of Winchester Cathedral with monks from the new monastery of Abingdon. The new monasteries, with considerable estates attached to them by royal grant, became centres of royal influence. Small wonder that at Edgar's imperial coronation at Bath in 973, the queen should entertain abbots and abbesses, together with monks and nuns.

The reign of Edgar also witnessed a revived emphasis upon episcopal power at the expense of local interests. In Mercia, Oswald, with the backing of the king, greatly expanded the territorial base of the church of Worcester. Against a background of royal expansion, the new monks became the backbone of the episcopate. Monastic bishops were in effect royal bishops. When Edgar died, however, there was a strong reaction in south-west Mercia against the monks, and local nobility who had seen their influence curtailed were able to expel the newcomers and restore their own clerks.

Equally significant was the role of the reformers as propagandists for a new-style national monarchy. Dunstan, Aethelwold and Oswald all saw the 'Godly Prince' as the chosen instrument of regeneration. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle spoke of how 'God had helped him [Edgar] to subdue kings and earls who cheerfully submitted to his will.' The *Regularis Concordia Anglicae Nationis*, the code drawn up in c. 970 to govern monastic life in England, allowed the king great influence. Abbots were to be 'freely' elected but subject to the royal prerogative. In the early eleventh century Wulfstan, successively bishop of London, bishop of Worcester and archbishop of York (d. 1023), was a particularly strong advocate of royal authority, even though by now the king was the Danish Cnut.

In both Church and State during the tenth century, what later generations would call a social and political revolution had taken place. If the picture given here is correct, however, there was no simple evolution. The Viking era brought about the downfall of the 'Old Order' and created conditions in which a new-style monarchy could extend its power from Wessex over English Mercia, and the Danelaw. What we do not know is the extent to which this 'empire' was accepted by its newly assimilated inhabitants. The problems which it ran into in the reign of Aethelred 'the Unready' (978–1016) suggest that Wessex-style monarchy with its heavy burden of taxation, its military-style government, its 'reformed' monasticism and its depressed peasantry did not enjoy as much universal support as conventional interpretations would have us believe.

The new monarchy in fact did not long outlive Edgar. Political problems seem to have arisen, associated with the succession. There was, in addition, a good deal of hostility towards the newly powerful monks.

Finally, from 980 onwards, Danish raids were renewed. Aethelred proved unable to deal with the many problems of his inheritance. In 1002 he was driven to the desperate but impracticable remedy of ordering the massacre of all Danes resident in England. His reign saw a prolonged struggle between the Wessex king and the kings of Denmark for control of England. In 1016 Aethelred died and was ultimately succeeded by the Dane Cnut (1016–35). 'England', now divided into four provinces, each ruled by a representative of Cnut, became in effect a colony of Denmark. Though Edward, Aethelred's son, returned to the throne in 1042, some years after Cnut's death, English links with Denmark remained strong. The Danelaw was still very much a Danish province with its own law and culture. Kings of Norway also maintained a claim to the English throne. In the mid-eleventh century, the period which had begun with the Viking raids of 793 showed little sign of having come to an end. It still looked very much as if the future of the English North Sea province would be linked with Scandinavia.

The events of the late tenth century and the first half of the eleventh bring out the problem of conceptualising the whole of the period from c. 500 to 1066 in terms of 'Anglo-Saxon England'. By the early eleventh century, it was the Danish colonists who were in control of events, and the term 'Anglo-Saxon' to some extent becomes a hindrance to our understanding the realities of the situation. We may therefore continue to think in terms of several sub-cultures each with its own distinctive traditions, though not uninfluenced by the rest. In some ways, the art of the period – with its distinction between the Viking motifs of the east coast and the Carolingian trends of Wessex – helps to bring this out more clearly than more conventional forms of historical evidence. There was perhaps no English 'nation' at this time, although such a view was totally unacceptable to such experts in the field as the late Patrick Wormald.

Viking influence in the western sea-channels from Orkney southwards had the effect of creating new links between Ireland and Britain, which replaced the cultural ties that had developed since the sixth century. Scandinavian culture now dominated Orkney, Shetland and the Outer Hebrides. Viking cities – Dublin, Cork, Wexford and Wicklow – dominated the western side of the Irish Sea. The Isle of Man, on which Viking control had replaced British rule, possessed a strategic importance during these centuries which it was not to enjoy again. The Viking kings of Dublin entered into alliances with native Welsh rulers, with Cornish princes attempting to resist the spread of Anglo-Saxon colonists and with the Gaelic rulers of the 'Kingdom of Scots'. If our attention is confined to England it is possible to treat the coming of the Vikings as a relatively short-lived threat which was dealt with effectively by Alfred the Great and

Figure 13. *The Cross of Cong*
The Cross of Cong (Co. Galway) is a major piece of Hiberno-Viking art in the free-flowing Isle of Urnes style of later Viking art. Now in the National Museum of Ireland, it illustrates the cultural impact of the Vikings on pre-Norman Ireland.

his successors. When seen in the context of the British Isles it is clear that Viking culture added a distinctive element, which remained unassimilated in many areas until the demographic crises of the fourteenth century.

The impact of the Vikings upon the Celtic-speaking cultures of the British Isles was in many respects similar to that which they had upon 'England'. The loose kinship-based structures of the sub-Roman period gave way to feudal polities which we may see as a response to the Viking threat. Marc Bloch, in his study of feudal society (*La Société féodale* (1939; English transl. 1961)), denied that feudalism spread to Celtic areas. In his view 'Celtic' societies remained non-feudal in character for the simple reason that kinship groups in these societies were strong enough to meet the Viking challenge. Modern Irish scholarship (and we know more about Ireland than about either Wales or Scotland) is less sure. It now seems that the older political divisions of Ireland gave way to a number of territorial kingdoms. By the first half of the twelfth century the political realities of Ireland revolved around new kingships which had arisen on the ruins of the old. These included the kingdoms of Leinster (much smaller in size than the modern province), Connacht (more limited in area than the modern province), Breifne (including modern Cavan and Leitrim) and in the south the kingdoms of south Munster (Desmond) and north Munster (Thomond). The ruling dynasties of these kingdoms were the families of MacMurrough, O Connor, O Rourke, MacCarthy and O Brien. By then the kingdom of Midhe in the hands of the Uí Néill had become 'the sick man of Ireland'; but at an earlier date under the aggressive leadership of Mael Sechlainn I (d. 862) of Clann Cholmáin it too may be numbered among these new-style kingdoms. By 1150, Ireland was very different from what it had been in the eighth century. Bloch, like many other historians, exaggerated the unchanging structure of 'Celtic' society.

One further fact may also be noted. The Normans did not reach Ireland until a century after they had overrun England and much of Wales. The Irish kingdoms, and to some extent those of Scotland, were given time to develop in the context of an 'Irish Sea Province', independently of Norman pressures.

The process by which these new regional monarchies emerged is still something of a mystery to historians. It was not part of an inevitable pattern of political evolution but the outcome of a struggle between two concepts as to what constituted an acceptable transfer of power. On the one hand political power was conceived of as residing within a wide lineage, distinguished by the possession of royal blood, on the other as belonging to a much narrower dynastic family. On the former pattern, political power did not descend directly from father to son but to a candidate chosen by the kinship group at large. This was the basis of 'tanistry', from

tánaiste ('the awaited one'), a candidate chosen in each generation with the right of succession. Hereditary feudal monarchy rested upon a different basis, according to which the choice of successor rested with the ruling king. Clearly two different conceptions as to what constituted a 'just' succession were involved.

Perhaps the best-known example of the bitter conflicts to which this situation might give rise is provided by a society whose history in many ways parallels that of Ireland. In eleventh-century Scotland, MacBeth killed the reigning king, Duncan, and took the kingship himself. Shakespeare's account of this episode, though excellent drama, is misleading historically. In fact, MacBeth was the older man, with a traditional claim resting upon traditional kinship right. It was the younger man, Duncan, grandson of the feudalising monarch Malcolm II, who represented the new tendency towards hereditary monarchy. In Scotland, as in Ireland, such an episode was not merely a power struggle, though it could also be that, but a conflict between two cultures, each with its own justification.

As we saw earlier, the rights and duties of lineages (that is, kinship groups which acted as a unit) were based upon long-standing local possession. In Ireland, as in much of Western Europe, the vendetta (*fíoc bunaid* in Irish, *galanas* in Welsh) seemed part of the 'nature of things'. In the absence of a central authority it was the ultimate sanction of law. Kinsmen had the duty to resort to it, if all else failed. Fear of causing a vendetta which might extend over several generations was clearly a powerful factor in persuading an offending party, pushed from behind perhaps by his own kinsmen, to seek out a member of the injured lineage and offer compensation. The guarantee for due performance would be a powerful person willing to act as surety. In all of these proceedings, the lineage and not the individual was the basic unit. To injure one was to injure all. To be injured by one was to be given the right to injure all.

Monarchical government, in contrast, stood for law enforcement from above and for exemplary punishment, not compensation. The king or the royal justices decided whether a crime had been committed and carried out the punishment, which could include hanging or mutilation. From the monarchical viewpoint the vendetta represented anarchy. To those adhering to the traditional kinship code, monarchy might well stand for savage and institutionalised injustice.

In Ireland, as in western Europe generally, the coming of the Vikings was an undoubted factor in the rise of the new monarchies. The impact of the Vikings on Ireland was as severe as it was upon other parts of the British Isles. During the ninth century the Vikings raided monasteries on the eastern and southern coasts and established a fortress at Dublin. In the course of the tenth century they established centres at Waterford,

Figure 14. *Viking chessmen from the Isle of Lewis*
These medieval chessmen from the Isle of Lewis illustrate the influence
of the Vikings upon the Outer Hebrides as well as the west of Scotland
generally. Place-names in Lewis are Scandinavian not Gaelic.

Limerick and Cork. In Wicklow the Vikings ('dark foreigners', *dubhgaill*,
from which the modern Irish surname 'Doyle' is derived) were kept to a
narrow strip of land between hills and sea. This section of the Irish coast,
now a tourist attraction for the growing conurbation of Dublin, was then
a wilderness which attracted the monks of Glendalough as well as the
Céili Dé of Tallaght and Finglas. As they did on the coast of Lancashire
at Formby and Ainsdale, the Vikings brought land into cultivation which
the native inhabitants could not themselves reclaim, or did not wish to.

   In some parts of Ireland and for some aspects of Irish culture, the initial
impact of the Vikings was devastating. During the first half of the ninth
century the north-east, the old kingdom of the Ulaid, suffered severely.
The monasteries of Bangor on Strangford Lough and Moville on the Ards

peninsula were destroyed. The loss of these monasteries, which formed the western end of a cultural unit stretching from Iona to Lindisfarne in Northumbria, was a blow from which the insular culture did not recover. Further down the coast the establishment of a Viking settlement at Dublin marked the beginning of a new age.

The second phase of Viking expansion, in the south of Ireland, was marked by both a greater emphasis on trade and a more decisive reaction on the Irish side. After some initial success the Viking colonists ('Ostmen', men from the east) at Limerick, Waterford and Cork found themselves compelled to come to terms with the local rulers and in effect became client states forced to dance to an internal pattern of politics. Tensions between the two cultures endured for a long time. In the late eleventh century, for example, the bishops of Dublin sought consecration from Canterbury rather than from their Irish neighbours.

Earlier historians, following the evidence of the annals, may well have exaggerated the destructive role of the Vikings. Another source of distortion derived from twelfth-century chronicles anxious to provide propaganda for their patrons. *The Struggle of the Gael against the Foreigner* (*Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh*), for example, described Brian Boru leading a campaign to drive the Vikings out of Ireland. In the view of some modern Irish scholars, the *Cogadh* now appears as very much a piece of official history written two centuries after the event to glorify the O Briens. The battle of Clontarf (1014) was fought not between Irish and Viking but between the forces of Brian Boru and an alliance of the kings of Leinster and Dublin Vikings, joined in an attempt to resist what they saw as the unwelcome intrusion of the O Briens of Munster. In such a context, the term 'Irish' can be as misleading as 'English' in the history of the North Sea Province.

So far from having a totally negative effect upon Ireland, and Europe generally, some of the Vikings at least seem to have been traders and farmers, not just marauders. Recent excavations in Dublin have produced unmistakeable evidence, in the form of coins and of manufactures such as shoes, for this aspect of Viking activity. The Vikings, indeed, may be seen as having opened up to commerce a culture which had been landlocked. The result, it would appear, was the rise to prominence of those parts of Ireland which hitherto had been of minor economic and political importance. The ports of Dublin, Wexford and Waterford eventually brought the kingdom of Leinster to a leading place among the new kingdoms. The same may also be said of the effect of Cork upon the MacCarthy kingdom of Desmond and of Limerick upon the O Brien kingdom of Ormond. The economic and financial resources which such centres represented provided the new monarchs with sources of revenue

which helped them to build on a much larger scale than had hitherto been possible. The link between the new monarchies and the Vikings is also indicated by the way in which Scandinavian motifs dominated 'Irish' art in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries.

The new patterns of monarchy first made their appearance in the southern half of Ireland during the tenth century. A hitherto subject people of the Eoghanachta, the 'Dál Cais', took advantage of the weakness of their overlords in the face of the Vikings to establish a kingdom of their own. Their leaders, Brian Boru and his elder brother, were 'new men' but it was not long before an appropriate genealogy had been manufactured, tracing the descent of the Uí Briain, as their successors were to be called, back to the Sons of Míl. Brian died in 1014 at the battle of Clontarf but his dynasty continued to be the leading force in the south for the next century and more. Unfortunately we know little about the machinery by which this kingdom was kept together, since historians have tended to concentrate their attention upon a largely mythical high kingship. As will appear later (see pp. 79–81), the O Briens, to give them their more familiar name, behaved not as 'high kings' but as regional monarchs of a new pattern, to be found elsewhere in the British Isles. Where they differed from the Eoghanachta was in their adoption of hereditary descent (or where an heir was too young, in granting the right to succeed to a close relative) and of territorial borders.

The best studied of the new kingdoms is Leinster, the last native king of which, Diarmaid MacMurrough (d. 1171), invited the Normans into Ireland. Until the Viking period 'Leinster' consisted of a number of groupings of *tuatha* (petty kingdoms), most of them under the tutelage of the Uí Néill. In the early eleventh century, Diarmaid MacMail na mBo (d. 1072), king of a newly powerful branch of the Uí Cheinnsellaigh, gained control of the Liffey valley hitherto ruled by the Uí Dúnlainge from their 'capital' at Naas. From then onwards (despite some setbacks) the dynasty of Diarmaid ruled as kings of an expanding Leinster, sometimes backed by other kingdoms as a client against the Uí Néill. In an elaborate analysis of the regnal succession in this area over several centuries, Professor O Corráin has shown how 'contest' forms of succession between widely diffused kinship groups eventually gave way to a much more concentrated form of dynastic succession. The prize for the victors was prestige, power and land. A similar type of development took place in the several other kingdoms which emerged from, or perhaps more accurately were carved out of, the 'Old Order' by leaders of ability, whose ambitions were to found their own dynasty.

The implications of the new patterns went well beyond regulations concentrating royal succession within a particular family. Feudal-style

changes implied control from above, in ways which were unprecedented in Irish society. The new spirit is to be seen most clearly in the ecclesiastical sphere. Hitherto, as we have seen, the monastic Church was loosely organised upon principles of kinship and clientage. Such attempts at centralisation as did take place were based not upon territorial unity but around networks linking monasteries which were divided by geography. The dispersed jurisdiction of a saint and his heirs may be seen as, to some extent, the ecclesiastical counterpart of the loose political organisation of the Uí Néill and of the Eoghanachta. Kinship groups on the traditional pattern of hereditary professions enjoyed remarkable continuity in their control of monastic endowments.

One of the most significant internal changes introduced by the new kings was the introduction of bishops as a weapon of 'reform' from above against the old-style 'kinship' monasteries. Thus within their kingdom of Munster the O Briens backed the creation of a diocese of Killaloe, which corresponded in extent with their own territory. In Connacht, the O Connor kings took over former O Flaherty territory and made its 'capital' Tuam (from *tuaim*, 'mound') into the see of a new diocese. Tuam in due course was to become the centre of an archbishopric. A similar development took place in the kingdom of Leinster where Ferns, on the site of an ancient monastery, became the seat of a new diocese, co-extensive with the territory controlled by the Uí Cheinnselaigh kings. In what is now Co. Cavan, Kilmore became the episcopal seat of the O Rourkes, kings of Breifne. Such changes in Ireland paralleled what was taking place in Wessex, England and Europe generally where bishops received their croziers from the king in a feudal ceremony. The bishops, as royal men, could be called upon to support royal authority within territories, which from one point of view were kingdoms and from another dioceses. Diarmaid MacMurrough made his brother-in-law, Lorcán Ua Tuathail/Laurence O Toole, archbishop of Dublin, when he wished to control that city; but he was not alone among Irish monarchs in cementing close links with the episcopate. As in the 'Tenth-Century Reformation' in England, the new bishops became an additional arm of the secular power.

In architecture, the spread of the new Romanesque style supplies a further indication of the activity of the new royal patrons. Early monastic churches had been on a small scale. The Romanesque churches were larger and more expensive, as befitted symbols of royal power. The most spectacular example of the new style is Cormac's Chapel built on the Rock of Cashel by Cormac MacCarthy and consecrated in 1134. Cashel had hitherto been associated with the Eoghanachta. The new chapel symbolised the coming of a new political order.

But Cashel did not stand alone. A building similar in style was constructed at Clonfert for the O Connors. At the older monastic sites of

Clonmacnoise and Glendalough larger buildings indicate the establishment of royal control. At Glendalough, for example, a new monastic 'city' was constructed well down the valley from the original site of St Kevin. It was here that a cathedral was built, which still displays its twelfth-century chancel. The king whose power this celebrated was Diarmaid MacMurrough. MacMurrough's hand was also to be seen in the building of a Romanesque church at Killeshin (Co. Carlow) on the site of an earlier foundation. Clonmacnoise, once a centre of Uí Néill influence, became an object of interest to the O Connors in the twelfth century. Turlough O Connor was buried there in 1156 and his son Ruaidhrí in 1198. Here, as elsewhere, building in the Romanesque style marks a new departure. Thus the Nuns' Church built (1167) by the celebrated Derbforgaill, wife of Tighernán Ua Ruairc, in the Romanesque style, is very much part of a general pattern of royal patronage. The gap between such works as this and the earlier churches is immense. One of them belonged to a new European feudal world, the other to one which was far more localised.

In view of all this 'modernising' activity in the southern half of Ireland, it is not surprising that further initiatives for ecclesiastical reform should also come from that area. In 1111 the first reforming Synod, that of Raith Bresail (near Cashel), was held under the auspices of Gilla Espuic, bishop of Limerick, who was backed by Muirchertach Ua Briain, king of Munster. Malchus of Lismore, a protégé of the MacCarthys, was another southern reformer. Reform, however, was not confined entirely to the south. At Armagh, Cellach (d. 1129) and his protégé, Malachy (d. 1148), were the spearhead of a movement to weaken the grip upon Armagh of the hereditary coarbs of Clann Sinaich, to which Cellach belonged. Malachy, after successes at Armagh, retired in 1137 to become bishop of Down. Here, as elsewhere, 'reform' implied the extension of episcopal authority with the backing of secular power. Another Synod held at Kells in 1152/3 instituted the four provinces of Armagh, Tuam, Cashel and Dublin. In so doing, it recognised political realities as well as the imperatives of reform. An earlier plan called for two archdioceses, based on Armagh and Cashel. The addition of Tuam and Dublin indicated the powerful influence of the O Connors and of Diarmaid MacMurrough. The new order in the Church marked a further decline in status of traditional monastic centres, such as Clonmacnoise, Emly, Kells and Clonard, and for the system of kinship-based monasticism which they symbolised.

The process of kingdom-building involved the growth of monarchical centres of power in ways which were analogous to the building up of territorial dioceses at the expense of local monasteries. The process has been insufficiently studied as yet by historians but enough has been done to provide glimpses of what was involved. Thus, the growth of the

O Connor kingdom of Connacht led to expansion from their base in Roscommon and the subsequent 'takeover' of the great plain of Galway around Tuam. The sufferers in the story were the O Flahertys who were forced into west Connacht. Similar internal conquest took place at the expense of the O Kellys of Uí Mhaine when the O Connors seized the strategic site of Athlone and erected a castle there; studies of the rise of the other kingdoms show a similar development. What had been local centres of power could no longer survive in a changing world. The choice lay between becoming the feudal vassals of the new kings or facing dispossession. Some local groups may have welcomed the protection of one king rather than another. Others may have had feudalism thrust upon them.

Many interrelated developments point to the rise of centralising kingships at the expense of traditional, diffused, political structures. In Ireland, as elsewhere in the British Isles and Western Europe, monarchy involved castle-building, the setting up of a royal household as a bureaucratic base, the establishment of professional armies and the raising of taxation to pay for them, the promulgation of law on the basis of royal authority rather than as the expression of local custom and, not least, the development of an 'ideology' of kingship.

No doubt the attacks of the Vikings, in Ireland as elsewhere, exposed the weaknesses of the *ancien régime* and made new developments possible. By the eleventh century, however, internal struggles had become the chief factor behind change. Control of Ireland's richest resource, land, was the reward for success. Kings were able to offer freshly acquired land to their followers and, in return, to receive homage. As we have seen, Church 'reform' offered possibilities in this direction. Thus Brian Boru's brother, Marcán, was the pluralist abbot of several monasteries on the Shannon. To make a grant to the Church in such circumstances was merely to transfer wealth from one branch of the family to another. But grants of land were also made on a large scale to loyal political followers. Thus Turlough O Connor granted away a large part of Meath to O Rourke who presumably, in his turn, granted it to his own followers as a means of making possession secure. Such Irish kings had little to learn, in this respect, from the Normans.

Where the kings retained control of new territories in their own hands, they appointed a governor or viceroy (*airrí*) on whom they could depend. At a level below these was the royal steward (*rechtaire*) and household-officials (*lucht tige*) normally drawn from less powerful segments of the royal lineage. Territorial kingship required royal 'capitals'. Thus the O Briens had as their seats Kincora, Killaloe, Dún na Scaith and not least Limerick which, from the mid-eleventh century, was a seat of O Brien

power. The O Connors for their part had Tuam, Athlone and Clonmacnoise. Castles, professional troops to man them and fleets of ships also made their appearance at this time. The need to finance such a political and military structure led naturally to taxation on a new scale.

From this period dates the rise of new bardic families who took the place of the *filid,* and of the monastic *fir teighir,* as six centuries earlier the *filid* had benefited from the fall of the druids and had become the custodians of secular traditions. What lay behind this change is still a matter for research but it would seem that the bards formed the basis of a new 'establishment', many of whose members were drawn from weaker segments of the major royal kindreds. Such families as the MacBrodys, historians to the O Briens, are typical of the new intellectual class which, like many of the humanists of the sixteenth century, produced propaganda for their patrons. Among the typical literary products of this establishment culture were the bardic poems.

Ideological backing for the new monarchies took several forms, one of the most subtle of which was genealogical in character. Under the influence of royal genealogists the genealogical tracts were 'ruthlessly edited', to use Professor O Corráin's words. Whereas thirty-one lines of descent within the ruling house of Ciarraige had been recorded in 750, by 1100 the focus had been narrowed to one line, that of the O Connors. Such a concentration upon a single royal line indicates more clearly than any other single fact how far access to political power shrank during this period. The rise of royal 'surnames' at this time also illustrates the same process at work. Older broad lineages gave way to narrower family loyalties indicated by the adoption of a 'surname'. Kinship loyalty remained strong but it was no longer defined within a clear structure but survived rather as a vague commitment to the *sliocht.*

Propaganda of a more obvious kind was provided by such treatises as *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh* (*The Struggle of the Gael against the Foreigner*) for the O Briens and *Caithréim Chellacháin Chaisil* (*The Wars of Cellachan of Cashel*) for the MacCarthys. The *Cogadh* stressed the role of the king as a dispenser of justice and keeper of the peace, while the *Caithréim* gave a picture of the ideal vassal. In an age which was largely illiterate, changes in ritual perhaps reached a wider audience.

Behind these changes lay a profound transition in attitudes to law. The evidence of the pre-Viking Age Irish law tracts suggests that in early Irish society law concerned the settlement of disputes between different kinship groups on the basis of compensation. From the tenth century onwards in Ireland, as in other parts of the British Isles, a new emphasis upon law as the imposition of authority from above makes its appearance. Christian teaching certainly played a significant part in this. An

eighth-century canon-law collection quotes with approval a text stating that 'the word of a king is a sword for beheading, a rope for hanging, it casts into prison, it condemns to exile'. The churchmen called upon the king to use capital punishment in defence of their interests, clearly a sharp contrast with the theory of early Irish law. Clerical teaching, indeed, was upon the duty of the king to exercise authority and not upon the limitations of his power.

Much of the significance of all this has been concealed from view by the fact that the Irish law tracts of a much earlier period continued to be copied down in the central and late middle ages. It seems clear, however, that continuity with the past, which such copying symbolised, was largely fictitious. Rudolf Thurneysen, the leading twentieth-century student of the law tracts, described the work of the later commentators as

creating an amalgam in which contact with the world of fact is abandoned in favour of elaborate calculations, minute casuistry and strange construction which often lead to impossible results and can never have had any significance for the practical administration of the law . . . the dreams of bookworms, of pedlars of antiquarianism.

The realities of legal practice which lay behind the smokescreen of the law tracts are suggested by brief references in the chronicles to royal lawyers. One of them was called 'ollam breithemnuis Erenn' ('professor of the jurisprudence of Ireland') but in practical terms he was a royal judge of the O Briens. Many of the new study-lawyers were churchmen, a fact which at this date suggests that they were both literate and sympathetic to the enforcement of law by royal authority. No doubt kinship groups imposed great limitations upon the full exercise of royal power, but the evidence certainly indicates that these developments were making their mark. The Irish high kingship may have been a 'will o' the wisp' as indeed was the regal vision of Alfred the Great's successors in Britain. But the realities of Irish kingly power in smaller units cannot be denied.

Between the coming of the Vikings and the Norman invasions beginning in 1169 it is clear that Irish society underwent a radical transformation. The old order of two ruling federations, each resting upon loosely organised networks of autonomous *tuatha* and locally based monastic communities, gave way to new-style territorial kingdoms held together by quasi-feudal ties and supported by a reformed episcopate, centralised religious orders and subordinate towns. The impact of the Vikings may have been partially responsible for this change but internal causes seem to have been as important. Perhaps because the Vikings did not affect Irish society as much as they did English, the swing towards monarchy was not as marked as it might have been. Many aspects of the old order of kinship

and clientage survived, though with reduced status and at a more infor-
mal level. The recognition of permanent feudal ties between lord and
vassal, the introduction of cash relationships and a new emphasis upon
the duty to obey a king or a bishop were new developments in Ireland
but they did not eradicate all traditional ties. Local cults still retained
their force. Local memories remained tenacious about the intrusion of
newcomers even when the official historians told a different story. The
vendetta remained even at the level of kinship. When Diarmaid MacMur-
rough abducted O Rourke's wife Derbforgaill in 1152 he created a feud
which was still reverberating over a decade later.

England and Ireland provide the most convenient and best-studied
examples of the impact of the Vikings upon the cultures of the British Isles.
Unfortunately we know much less about northern Britain and 'Wales'.
The problem presented by ignorance is made worse by the manner in
which national historians of 'Wales' and 'Scotland' (as indeed those of
'England' and 'Ireland') create a framework which presents the 'emer-
gence' of these 'nations' as the primary fact in which we should be inter-
ested. Indeed, we deal better with the intricacies of historical development
if we leave 'national' categories out of the picture as much as possible.
In both northern and western Britain, we may assume, several distinct
cultures continued to exist with their own sense of identity and their
own view of 'their' past. What later generations see as the emergence
of a nation involved the superimposition of one culture upon another.
In what we know as 'Scotland', an Irish Q-Celtic culture succeeded in
imposing itself upon Picts, Britons and Anglians. But this occurred only
in the south and east; in the north and west, Viking culture was to achieve
its own dominance. Thus the net result of the Viking invasions was a new
division of northern Britain into distinctive cultural areas. In 'Wales', the
Viking presence was less marked than it was elsewhere in the British Isles
but the consequences were severe enough to induce profound changes.

One of the main results of the arrival of the Vikings in the Irish Sea
was probably to make contact more difficult between the various P-Celtic
communities of west Britain though there is no evidence that links with
Brittany and Ireland were cut, rather the reverse. Such links came to be
symbolised in the figures of St Samson of Dol (d. 565), who was believed
to have left south Wales for Brittany, and St Illtyd, the founder of the
monastery in south Wales which came to be known as Llantwit Major
(viz., Llanilltud Fawr, the principal church of Illtud), who was believed to
come from Brittany. The close links of the kingdom of Dyfed with Ireland
are also evident during the sub-Roman period. From the ninth century
onwards, however, Viking control of the Severn Sea (indicated by over
forty Scandinavian place-names in south Wales) and of the Dee estuary

divided the P-Celtic cultures of the west more sharply than had been the case before. Some historians believe that the result of these changes was to make possible the emergence of 'Wales' as a distinct British geographical area, separated from Cornwall, Brittany and Strathclyde.

But 'Wales' still remains an elusive concept. There is a Bismarckian assumption about much modern Welsh historical writing as if 'unification' were an end towards which the history of western Britain should have been moving. Thus the ninth-century king, Rhodri the Great, and the tenth-century king, Hywel the Good, once earned approval from historians for their attempts to bring unity to the disparate parts of 'Wales'. The fact that they did not succeed should give us pause. Clearly they met with opposition from their fellow-countrymen who, on nationalist assumptions about the past, should have been the first to welcome their efforts. The term 'Wales' provides a clue as to why such opposition should exist. 'Wales' ('foreign') did not exist save in the minds of the Anglo-Saxons to the east. The P-Celtic-speaking inhabitants of the west saw themselves primarily as 'Britons' belonging to one or other of the various sub-Roman kingdoms or tribal groupings into which the area was divided.

To do some degree of justice to the complexity of the situation during this period we would do well to think of western Britain as being divided into at least three sub-cultures, one (Gwynedd) looking north to Strathclyde and the other 'Gwyr y Gogledd' (the 'Men of the North'), another (Powys) oriented more towards Mercia in the east but still retaining through its bardic poetry the memory of ties with northern Britain, and a third (Dyfed, Glamorgan and Gwent) linked southward towards the Severn Sea, Cornwall and Brittany. There was no sense of unity in 'Wales'. Attempts by any of these sub-cultures to assert dominance over the others were resisted, even to the extent of seeking help from the Anglo-Saxons. Thus in the ninth century the southern kingdoms of Dyfed, Glywysing and Gwent sought help from Wessex in an attempt to stave off pressure from Gwynedd.

The cultural differences between north and south probably went back to tribal loyalties which the Roman empire had done little to weaken. There was also a 'hidden Wales' in the border counties of Cheshire, Shropshire and Herefordshire, about which we know little but which almost certainly continued to haunt memories on the 'Welsh' side of the border. In the tenth century, as the poem *Armes Prydein Vawr* (*Prophecy of Great Britain*) indicates, some Britons at least were hoping, in alliance with the Vikings, the Scots and Strathclyde, to drive the English into the sea. Had the battle of Brunanburh (937) turned out differently, some Welsh border territory might have been recovered. As late as the eleventh

Figure 15. *Odd's Cross slab from the Isle of Man*
This cross slab is a reminder of the importance of the Isle of Man during the Viking period when it served as a major base controlling the seas between Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

century many English settlements well to the east of Offa's Dyke bore the mark of British raids, as Domesday Book itself indicates in references to 'vills laid waste'.

It was during this period of profound change that an 'invention of tradition' took place comparable to that which occurred in England and Ireland. The *History of the Britons* lays particular stress upon the role of the northern kingdom of Gwynedd and was perhaps written as a piece of 'official history' to provide backing for the new dynasty of which Rhodri Mawr (the Great) was to be the main representative. The *History of the Britons* also contains references to the sixth-century bards, Aneirin and Taliesin, presumably as an attempt to provide further 'historical' backing. Aneirin may well have been the author of *The Gododdin*, the heroic poem dealing with events in north Britain during the sixth century. The emergence of episcopal sees at St Davids in Dyfed and Bangor in Gwynedd probably also represents an attempt by the new kings to 'modernise' the Church in their own territories at the expense of the localised monastic institutions of an earlier period. In these various ways, the new dynasties which the Viking period brought into existence created a sense of legitimacy for themselves.

As elsewhere in the British Isles, in Wales the coming of the Vikings led to the downfall of the 'Old Order'. New men, the Welsh equivalent of the O Briens, carved out kingdoms for themselves. In the north, during the ninth century, the new dynasty of Merfyn Frydi (its first king, 826–44) and Rhodri the Great took over Gwynedd. In the south in the tenth century a great part of south Wales came to be known as Morganwg (the 'Glamorgan' of a later period) from one of its most successful rulers, Morgan (c. 930–74). New men also seized the ancient kingdom of Gwent. In the south-west, Hywel, known to history as Hywel Dda, acquired control of the kingdom of Dyfed. He also briefly became king of Gwynedd (942–50). Faced with a choice between Viking and Anglo-Saxon, Hywel chose the latter, rejecting the policy of resistance which the poet of *Armes Prydein Vawr* advocated.

In northern Britain at the end of the eighth century cultural patterns were more variegated than was the case further south. North of the Humber, Anglian culture was dominant up to the Firth of Forth; P-Celtic culture still survived on the Clyde and the Solway Firth; the Q-Celtic Irish of Dalriada controlled Argyll and the Isles and had extended their influence north-eastwards; and on the east coast the Pictish kingdom maintained a precarious independence. Four cultures, four languages and four legal traditions contended for supremacy with the balance perhaps favouring the Anglo-Saxons and the Q-Celts. All this was to be radically changed from the end of the eighth century as a result of the Viking invasions.

In the north, the Vikings seized control of the territory of the northern Picts in Orkney, Shetland and Caithness. The hill land to the south of the plain of Ross came to be called 'Sutherland' (Southland), a geographical perspective which reflected the viewpoint of the newcomers. The place-name 'Dingwall' near the Moray Firth is the same as 'Thingwall' on the coast of Lancashire, both names illustrating the influence of the Vikings in northern Britain.

In the west of 'Scotland' the repeated sacking of Iona by Vikings from 793 onwards marked the failure of the rulers of Dalriada to protect their holy places and increasingly control of the Western Isles was taken over by the Gall-Gaedhil ('Foreign Gaels'), raiders of mixed culture, who spoke a form of Q-Celtic. Viking influence was dominant from the Outer Hebrides southwards (the place-names of the Isle of Lewis are heavily Scandinavian). The kingdom of Strathclyde effectively lost its independence after the taking of Dumbarton in 870 and became a client state of the 'Kingdom of Scots', whose rulers connived at the murder of the last of its independent kings. Strathclyde maintained a precarious separate existence into the eleventh century but was never again a major local power.

Change was equally marked in the east where from the mid-ninth century the kingdoms of the southern Picts fell under the control of a 'new man' of obscure background, Kenneth MacAlpin. MacAlpin's career resembles that of other new-style kings in other parts of the British Isles. A 'Kingdom of Scots' now arose based upon the conquest of Pictland, Strathclyde and of Anglian Bernicia. The dominant culture of this kingdom was at first the Irish culture of Dalriada from which Kenneth came. It is tempting to assert that, as was the case with the new dynasties of Wales and Ireland, a fictitious genealogy was soon concocted, linking him with the early rulers of Dalriada, Cenel Gabhrain, but it is not clear that he belonged in fact to that lineage. Finally, further south, the collapse of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria in the face of Viking attacks led to the setting up of a Viking kingdom of York. The ninth century saw the establishment of a Viking empire in north Britain, which in its heyday influenced the course of events within the British Isles from 'capitals' at Dublin and York.

There is a general tendency among historians of Scotland (as also among English and Irish historians) to play down the importance of the role of the Vikings in the history of northern Britain as if it were historically predetermined that the Scottish nation should emerge under the leadership of the south-eastern-based 'Kingdom of Scots'. The fact that the Vikings came to speak Gaelic and to adopt the kinship-based framework of Celtic society has tended to obscure the Viking presence in
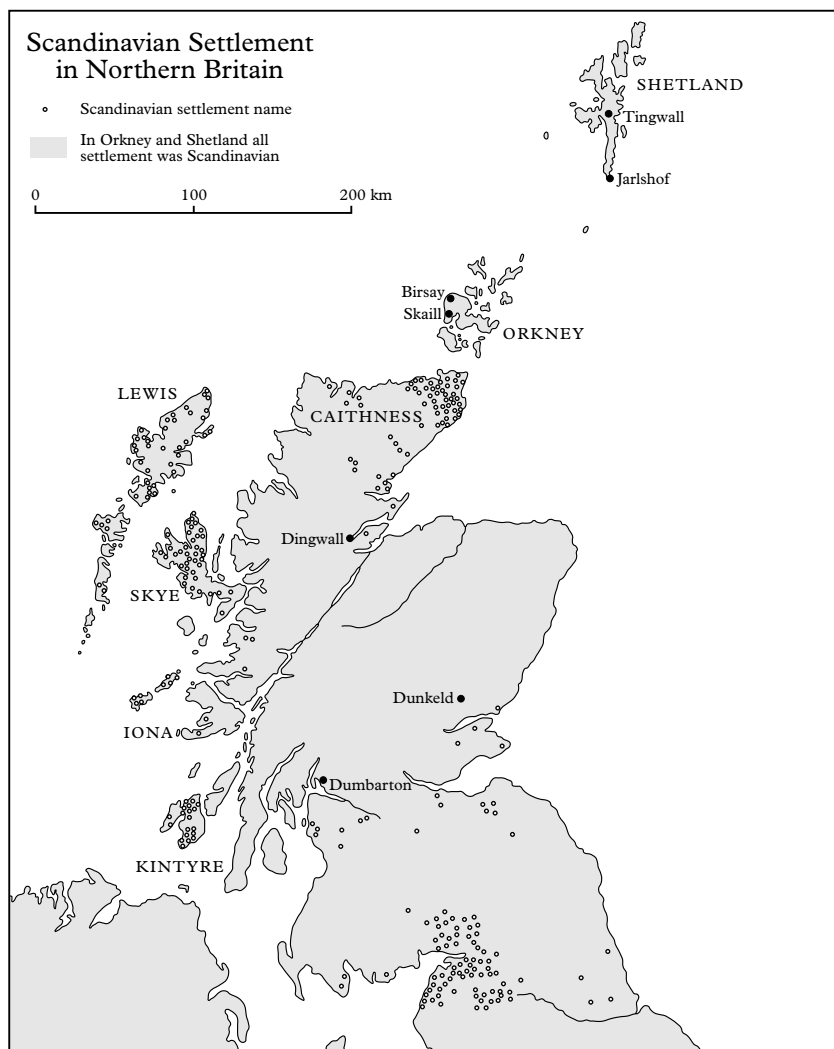
Map 9. Scandinavian settlement in northern Britain.

the Highlands and the Hebrides. The 'MacDonalds' and 'MacDougalls' of Highland history take their names from the 'Donald' and 'Dougall' who were grandsons of Somerled, the Gaelic-Scandinavian chief who carved out a kingdom for himself in Argyll. (The name 'Dougall' itself derives from *dubhgall* ('dark foreigner') which as we have seen appeared as 'Doyle' in Ireland.) 'Somerled' itself was also gaelicised into 'Somhairle'

and eventually anglicised into 'Sorley' in the late sixteenth century. (Sorley Boy MacDonnell, the Ulster chieftain who came into conflict with Elizabeth, was Somhairle Buidhe – Sorley the Blond.) Indeed, the military traditions of the Highlands probably derive from the Vikings rather than from the so-called 'wild Irish'. It has even been suggested that the bitter rivalries between Campbells and MacDonalds derive from the overthrow of the Christian kingdoms by the pagan Viking newcomers in the ninth century and a long-lived legacy of hatred which was its result.

A permanent Scandinavian presence in Britain north of the Humber was one of the main consequences of the invasions of the ninth and tenth centuries. Another indirect consequence was the establishment of a Gaelic empire, the 'Kingdom of Scots', in what had been the independent territories of southern Pictland, Strathclyde and (northern) Bernicia. In effect, this brought about, for a time, the dominance of Gaelic culture in these areas leaving Pictish, British and Anglian cultures in a subordinate position. The Welsh *Brut y Tywysogion* (*Chronicle of the Princes*) states that 'the men of Strathclyde . . . had to depart from their country, and to go to Gwynedd'. In later stories it is stated that Kenneth MacAlpin came to be king 'after violent deaths, after violent slaughter'. Thus the 'Kingdom of Scots' did not emerge as part of a providential development in which 'Scotland' came to take its place among the nations of the earth but, at least in the eyes of its sub-cultures, as a process analogous to that by which the Vikings established themselves elsewhere.

The novelty of these developments in the 'Kingdom of Scots' was indicated by the way in which the new dynasty came to cut its links with Iona and to give its patronage to new holy places at Dunkeld and St Andrews. The introduction of St Andrew, an apostle without any apparent connection with Britain, as a cult-figure in eastern Pictland was an important symbolic change. These changes were not, however, accompanied by a shift towards episcopacy, a development which in Scotland did not occur until 1100 at the earliest. Though it was called the 'Kingdom of Scots' there were in fact relatively few 'Scots' (viz., Gaels) in the new kingdom save as a ruling elite (the English ascendancy in eighteenth-century Ireland offers a possible comparison). Of all the political units of the British Isles, the 'Kingdom of Scots' had the least homogeneous cultural foundations.

On the eve of the Norman Conquest of 1066 the future of the British Isles seemed to be largely linked to Scandinavia. Seaborne trade in all areas was in Viking hands. The ports of the east coast of Ireland and of the eastern and western coasts of Britain were essentially Viking centres. The Vikings were also solidly entrenched in many areas of the British Isles from the Shetlands south to Galloway, Lancashire and East Anglia. A new
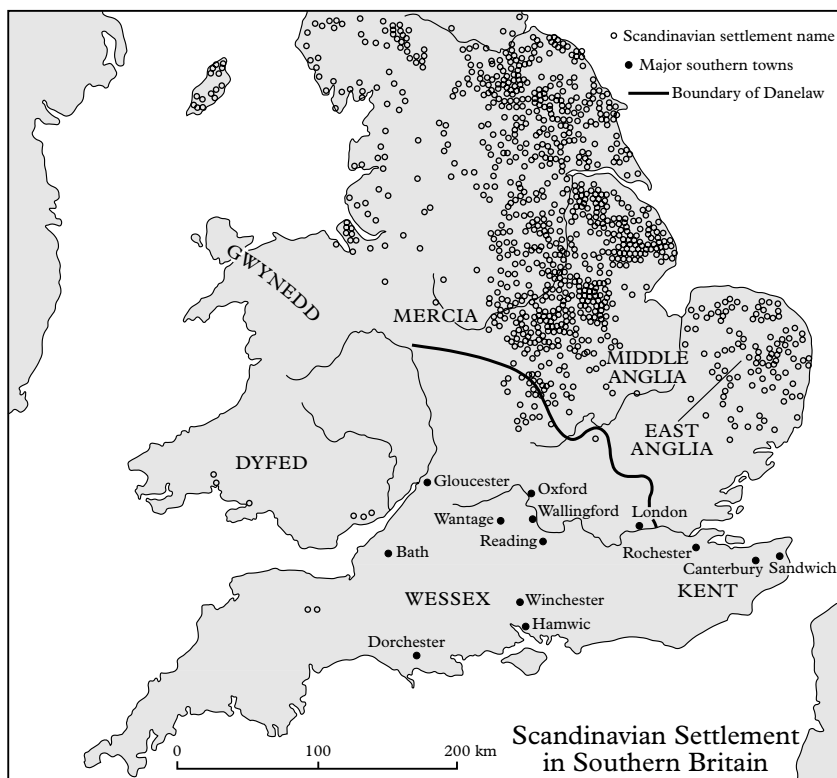
Map 10. The boundary agreed by Alfred and Guthrum, c. 880, between England and the Danelaw, and the distribution of Scandinavian place-names.

period, this time of French-speaking ascendancy, was about to begin. Over the British Isles as a whole, however, the decline of Scandinavian influence was a much slower process than was the case in England. It was not until the mid-thirteenth century that the kingdom of Norway relinquished its rights over Scotland but Viking traditions still remained strong in Orkney, Shetland and Caithness as well as in the Western Isles. In Ireland the Viking towns long preserved their own sense of cultural identity. (Waterford, for example, later took as its motto *urbs intacta*, 'intact' in this instance meaning 'intact' from Irish incursions.) In north Britain also, Viking cultural traditions survived (within what had been the Danelaw) long after the Norman Conquest. Had the battle of Hastings turned out differently the future of the British Isles for many centuries might have lain with Scandinavia, an alternative course of events which the historian cannot dismiss as an impossibility.

Postscript

The aim of this chapter was to discuss the impact of the Vikings upon the British Isles. This was and remains a controversial topic, the key question being to what extent the Vikings may be seen as making a positive contribution, in terms of trade, for example, rather than as simply pirates and raiders, as the established view maintains. Recently this orthodoxy has been modified, the most convincing evidence being provided by Ireland. Professor O Croínín in his excellent discussion of 'the Viking Age'(Chapter 9 of *Early Medieval Ireland 400–1200* (London, 1995)) dismisses Binchy's view that the Vikings practised 'total war' in which no holds were barred. 'On the contrary', O Croínín argues, 'the annals indicate all too clearly that before, during and after the Viking period more churches were plundered and more clerics killed by the Irish than by the Norse.' O Croínín dismisses the criticisms of the Vikings in the official history of the O Briens as a 'rousing narrative' which is 'about as good a source of information on the Vikings as *Star Trek* is for the American space programme'. O Croínín does not let the Vikings entirely off the hook, however. He admits that initially the raids had a traumatic effect on their victims but that soon the Vikings came to intermarry with the local population. This chapter in *Early Medieval Ireland* should be a required piece of reading for those interested in the Viking period not least for O Croínín's judgement that

Despite everything that has been said in later Irish histories Dublin in fact survived the battle of Clontarf unscathed and in the eleventh and twelfth centuries enjoyed a position of unrivalled importance both as an emporium for the entire Atlantic trade of the north-western world and also as a base for a powerful fleet which could be hired out as a mercenary force in England and Wales to contestants on either side of the political divide. (*Early Medieval Ireland* (1995), p. 270)

In contrast, recent scholarly commentaries upon Anglo-Saxon England have tended to ignore the impact of the Vikings. James Campbell, for example, in his brilliant book *The Anglo-Saxon State* (2000) takes as his main theme the rise of England during the ninth and tenth centuries as a 'nation-state'. A similar emphasis is also to be found in Patrick Wormald's book, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century* (1999). Campbell places the heartland of the English state in Wessex, a point reinforced by his comment that until Victoria acquired Balmoral and the future Edward VIII acquired Sandringham, the monarchs of England had no significant residence north or east of Watling Street. On this view of English history, the Vikings are a remote force. The trump card for Campbell and Wormald is the existence of Domesday Book, a survey which implied the existence of an administrative machine unrivalled in

Viking Settlement of Ireland
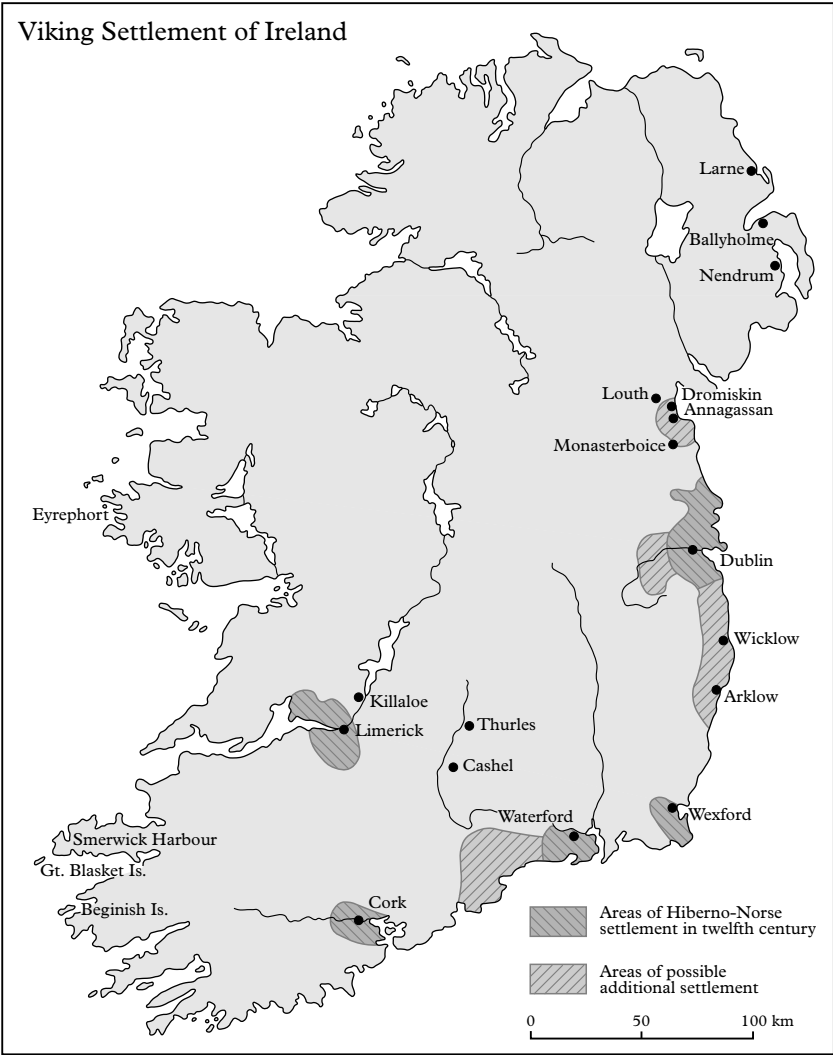
Map 11. The Viking settlement of Ireland.

Western Europe. Even so, doubts may be raised about the extent to which the power of the Anglo-Saxon monarchy extended north of the Trent before and even after 1066.

North of the Tweed, of course, the Vikings were a formidable presence particularly on the west coast and in the Isle of Man (a point touched on by O Croínín). In the historiography of Scotland, the influence of the

Vikings has been played down. It is the Gaelic tradition exemplified in the long line of mythical kings stretching back to Fergus, which is allotted a prime historical place. Here also, however, as in the case of northern and eastern England, the role of the Vikings deserves more consideration. At this date, of course, as Professor Campbell and others remind us, Scotland was still ethnically divided. John Gillingham, for example, quoted Richard Hexham's description of King David I's army in 1138: 'After the battle his men scattered, and in flight they dealt with each other not as friends but as foes. For the English and the Scots and the Glaswegians and the rest of the barbarians, whenever they chanced upon each other . . . took the opportunity to kill, wound or rob the other' (A. Grant and Keith J. Stringer, eds., *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London, 1995)). Mention may also be made of a recent study, John D. Niles and Mark Amodio, *Anglo-Scandinavian England: Norse–English Relations in the period before the Conquest* (London, 1989), which seeks to correct the Germanic/Norman bias of current scholarship. Professor James Campbell's volume *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London, 2000) remains essential reading.

5   The Norman and post-Norman ascendancy

The victory of the Normans in 1066 brought revolutionary changes in its wake, not merely for southern Britain but in due course for the rest of the British Isles. Its effects were most immediate in 'England'. William, who was crowned at Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day, lost little time in establishing himself and his followers. So complete was the Conquest that it is tempting to think in terms of a united kingdom. But the situation as it presented itself in the aftermath of the battle of Hastings was not yet so very different from what it had been earlier. Southern Britain was still divided into its distinctive cultures and these would continue to exist.

The itineraries of Cnut (d. 1035) and Edward (d. 1066), when mapped by a modern cartographer, make it clear that the heartland of the west Saxon monarchy was still the area south of the Thames. 'Wessex' was distinguished by large concentrations of royal and ecclesiastical land and by wealthy monasteries open to royal influence. In this region, royal writs and charters were effective and an efficient administration collected geld. This was also a society with a large percentage of unfree labour. There was some resistance in Wessex to the newcomers, at Exeter in 1069 for example, but for a long time to come this part of England was to provide a secure foundation for monarchy.

In the east, where Scandinavian influences were strong, there was a different story. In 1069, a Danish fleet arrived at the abbey of Ely which had close ties with the Danish monarchy. For a short time, under Hereward the Wake, there was to be active resistance to the Normans. Further north, the earldom of Northumbria still enjoyed a tradition of independence from Wessex, most recently displayed when Harold's brother Tostig had been displaced as earl. Northumbria, which comprised the former Danish kingdom of York and former Bernician 'Anglian' territory north of the Tees, could hope for help from Scotland or Norway or Denmark in resisting the Normans. William himself seems at first to have avoided direct intervention in this sensitive area but its opposition to the payment of geld led him towards a more aggressive policy. In 1069, after a period of crisis during which the Normans experienced defeat and a Danish
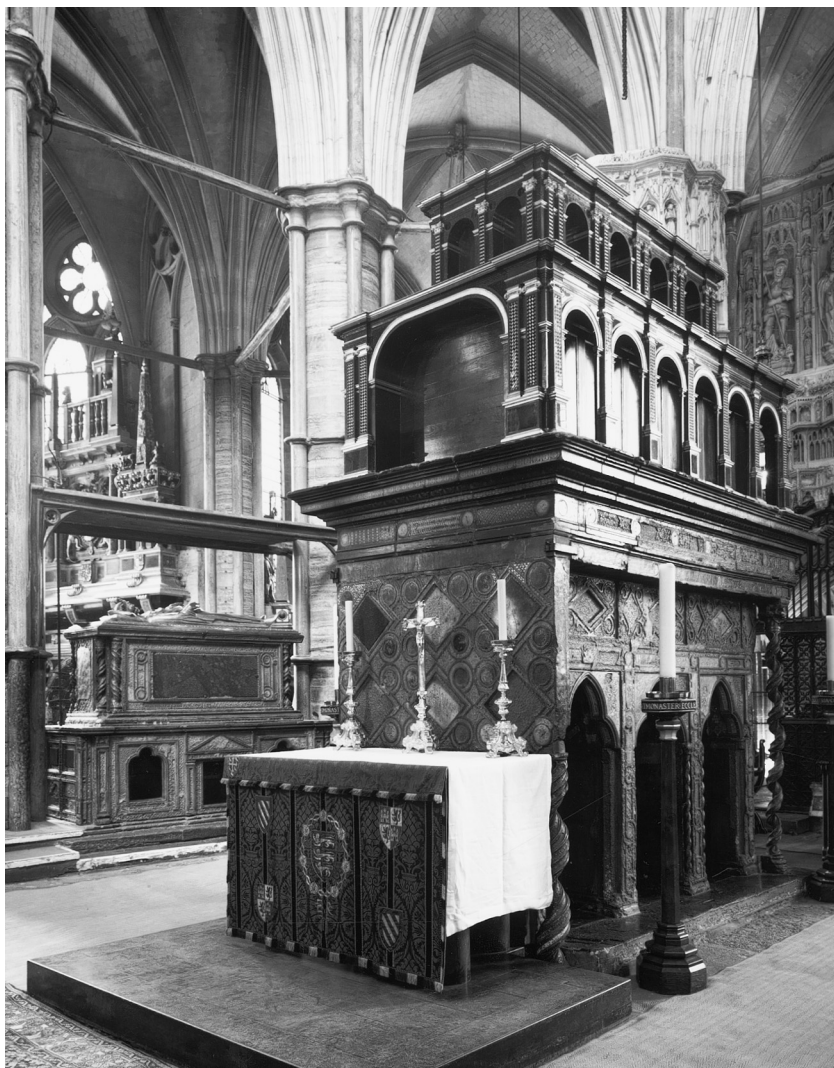
Figure 16. *The tomb of Edward the Confessor, Westminster Abbey*
The importance of Edward the Confessor lies largely in the myth of
'the Holy Edward's Laws' which lay behind Magna Carta and the
seventeenth-century belief in the Ancient Constitution stretching back
to Anglo-Saxon times. Edward also provided the basis of William the
Conqueror's claim to the throne. His tomb is thus a key symbol.

Map 12. The Norman Conquests, 1066–1169.

army took Hull, William intervened to administer a severe lesson. After the 'harrying of the North', the independent character of the northern Danelaw was largely undermined. Its place was to be taken by 'York-shire', reconstructed on the southern manorial model. Norman castles at Newcastle (at the strategic Tyne-crossing), Durham, York, Norwich and

Lincoln symbolised the effective presence of the Norman monarchy on the east coast.

In the north and west, there had been something of a 'Celtic resurgence' early in the eleventh century as a result, in part, of a period of weakness of the west Saxon monarchy. In the north-west, Strathclyde recovered parts of Cumbria which had been lost to the English. In Wales, under the leadership of Gruffydd ap Llywelyn, the frontier with Mercia was pushed back beyond Offa's Dyke. In 1055, Hereford was sacked and English villages such as Knighton were abandoned. In all this, Gruffydd could rely upon help from the Vikings of Dublin and Wexford and, in a complex political situation in which Mercia was opposed to Wessex, upon an alliance with Aelfgar, earl of Mercia. A successful campaign in Wales by Harold of Wessex brought this to an end in 1063. Gruffydd's head was sent to Harold by his own followers as a symbol of surrender and his place was taken by client kings.

In Wales, changes were apparent even before 1066. Norman influence was already being felt in Herefordshire in the person of Richard FitzOsbern, who had been called in by Edward the Confessor to defend this exposed frontier. But the Conquest began in earnest in the decades following. By the end of the century the Normans were in complete control of south Wales. On the borders the earldoms of Chester, Shrewsbury and Hereford controlled Mercians and Welsh alike. In the northern kingdom of Gwynedd there was a more complex situation. Here, with the backing of the Scandinavian kingdom of Dublin, Gruffydd ap Cynan halted the Norman advance. In 1098, the fleet of Magnus Barefoot, king of Norway, on a raiding expedition from the Isle of Man, appeared off the coast of Anglesey and took the Normans, under the earl of Shrewsbury, by surprise. As a result of this defeat, the Normans seem to have decided to be content with 'indirect rule' in Gwynedd and Powys, tolerating the existence of Welsh princes, provided they did not constitute a threat.

In Scotland, Norman influence was also exerted indirectly through the sons of Malcolm III Canmore (1058–93). Malcolm himself was a 'modernising' monarch, on the lines of the O Briens in Ireland, and in supporting his sons the Normans were taking the side of strong monarchy against aristocratic lineages. They did not become fully involved, however, until 'invited' to do so by Malcolm's youngest, David I (1124–53), who had been educated and knighted at the court of Henry I. David encouraged Normans to settle in lands north and south of the Forth and under William the Lion (1165–1214) the process was taken further. In effect, a Norman settlement took place under the auspices of the Scottish Crown. Lothian and Strathclyde were particularly affected, but there was

Figure 17. *The Norman cathedral on the Rock of Cashel*
The Norman cathedral on the Rock of Cashel symbolises the dominance
of the Normans over the south of Ireland. It overshadows Cormac's
Chapel which was built (1128–34) by the MacCarthys, who ruled the
area before the Normans arrived in 1169.

also Norman penetration further north in Fife and Moray. Such 'Scottish'
families as Fraser, Haig, Bruce, Wishart (Guiscard) and Stewart (many
of them today complete with tartan and kilt) first made their appearance
in Scotland as a result of this episode.

The various kingdoms of Ireland remained unaffected by Norman
power until 1169, although, as we have seen, they were by no means unaf-
fected by 'modernising' tendencies in Church as well as state. The Viking

towns of the east coast were in control of the Irish Sea and in contact with Scandinavian settlements on its west coast from Galloway southwards. In 1169–70, this situation changed dramatically when the exiled king of Leinster, Diarmaid MacMurrough, asked the Norman lords of south Wales to help him regain his kingdom. In many ways, Diarmaid's decision to seek Norman aid resembled that of David of Scotland, earlier in the century. In Ireland, however, the Normans encountered stronger opposition. Even so, by the end of the century, they were in control of much of the country.

The Norman successes created a French-speaking ascendancy throughout the British Isles. By the end of the twelfth century the various kingdoms and provinces which had been independent entities were ruled by an aristocracy, which in its turn was linked by ties of vassalage to a single monarch. Even the king of Scotland with large estates in midland England (the Honour of Huntingdon) was in a measure incorporated within the system. The kings of Gwynedd in the thirteenth century did homage to Henry III. For a time, in the late twelfth century, the British Isles formed part of a wider empire which also included Aquitaine.

Throughout this period, French culture was a symbol of belonging to the political and ecclesiastical elite. The result was to downgrade the status of the various languages and cultures of the North Sea and Irish Sea Provinces. To speak these languages could be a mark of bondage. Lanfranc, the Norman archbishop of Canterbury, referred when writing to Pope Alexander II to his own ignorance of the language of 'barbarous peoples'. In religion, the Normans saw themselves as reformers. They replaced what they regarded as a superstitious attachment to local saints with 'uncouth' names with the veneration of saints of the universal Church. Churches dedicated to St Peter, St Thomas, St Andrew and others replaced saints with possibly dangerous or unfashionable local attachments. The Normans also left their mark on the language of the people whom they ruled, as the following selection of French loanwords in Middle English indicates.

1 ADMINISTRATION, LAW: Crown, parliament, reign, royal, state, city, council, court, evidence, fine, fraud, gaol, prison.
2 DRESS: apron, bonnet, boot, brooch, chain, collar, jacket, jewel, (boot-)lace, ornament, petticoat.
3 FAMILY: aunt, cousin, nephew, niece, uncle.
4 FOOD, MEALS, FRUITS: bacon, beef, mutton, partridge, pheasant, pigeon, poultry, sausage, sugar, tripe, veal, dinner, feast, supper, date, fig, grape, lemon, orange, raisin.

5 HOME, HOUSEHOLD, FURNITURE: chamber, pantry, parlour, scullery, blanket, coverlet, curtain, cushion, quilt, towel, chair, dresser, wardrobe.

6 MILITARY: army, battle, guard, navy, peace, soldier, spy (also military ranks).

7 RANKS: clerk, duke, farmer, master, mistress, prince, servant, sir.

8 RELIGION: abbey, convent, lesson, mercy, parson, pity, prayer, preacher, saint, sermon, sexton, vicar.

9 MISCELLANEOUS: dozen, flour, flower, (cart) grease, hour, litter, mange, more, oil, ounce, pasture, people, person, pocket, quarry, quart, quarter, rein, second, squirrel, stallion, stranger, tailor, tune.

In all areas of the British Isles, the instruments of empire were the castle, the Church and the borough. In England alone, it has been estimated, the Normans built nearly a thousand castles, though few of these were on the grand scale of royal castles. There were well over three hundred in Wales. Castles were fewer in the west Saxon heartland but many were needed in the former Danelaw and in the marcher lordships of Wales. Scotland, too, had its quota of castles on the Norman model. In Ireland Norman mottes and baileys controlled the rich lands of Meath and Tipperary. But castles were not a completely new feature in Ireland. Some Irish kings were building them in the modern idiom before the Normans arrived.

The Church was an integral part of this system, not least because the large ecclesiastical estates were expected to provide their due quota of knights for the royal army. With the Normans came a new emphasis on spectacular building. Edward the Confessor prefigured the trend with his abbey at Westminster. After the Conquest, such cathedrals as Durham and Ely with their imposing message of dominance may be taken as symbols of imperialism. All this was accompanied by the introduction of French religious orders and French colonies of monks. Norman abbeys benefited from grants of English and Welsh land. The military orders of the Temple and of St John took root in marcher areas: the most prominent of the new religious orders, the Cistercians, also came to play a role in this process. The Norman Conquest did not involve the movement of peoples on the grand scale as had occurred during the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian/Viking invasions. In some areas, however – in particular eastern Ireland, south Wales and parts of Scotland – it did promote a considerable degree of selective, sponsored colonisation. For this the instruments to hand were the borough and the nucleated settlement. Throughout the British Isles the borough was a sign of effective Normanisation. By offering the relative freedom of borough tenure, both king and lords were able to attract settlers from Flanders to Wales and in due course to Scotland
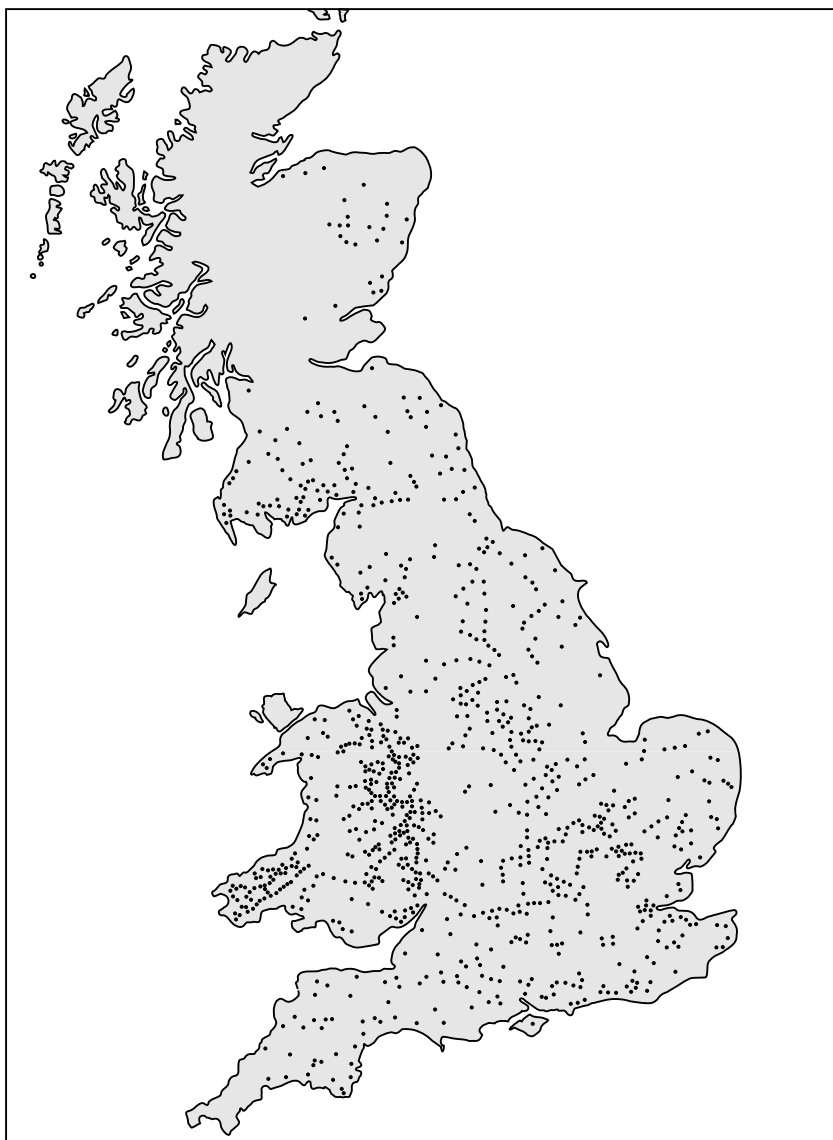
Map 13. The distribution of motte and bailey castles in Britain.

and Ireland. When land-hunger grew in the thirteenth century a further incentive was added. In north Wales, Edward I's royal boroughs became the points around which colonisation of the countryside was organised.

If some assessment of the significance of three centuries of Normanisation is attempted, it may be argued that the effect of the Normans was felt most strongly in the Irish Sea Province. In Wessex, the Normans had inherited an existing system and, though they undoubtedly introduced major changes, they did not transform the social structure. In the Scandinavian areas of eastern England, the trading centres soon recovered. Here, as elsewhere, the Normans superimposed their own culture, though the existing divisions between the 'command' society of Wessex and the 'market' society of the east remained. In the Irish Sea Province, where the Normans met with severe resistance, they destroyed existing kinship structures and replaced them with a hierarchical, centralised framework. 'Modernisation' on continental lines was already well advanced in the Irish kingdoms and in Scotland under Malcolm Canmore. What the Normans did was to carry it forward in a revolutionary manner. Feudal relationships were imposed from above, not sought from below.

The general tendency of English historians has been to domesticate the Norman Conquest. In the late nineteenth century Stubbs saw it as an example of a 'masculine' race disciplining and educating a 'feminine' race. The mid-twentieth-century medievalist David Knowles admired the vigour and strength of the Normans. The American sociologist George Homans felt that England was 'fortunate' in being ruled by the Norman aristocracy. The fact remains, however, that the Normans behaved as conquerors and remained conscious of the origins of their power for long after 1066. Late in the thirteenth century William de Warenne spoke of 'how his ancestors came with William the Bastard and conquered their lands by the sword'.

The result of the Conquest was to create a two-class society. It is true that Richard FitzNeal spoke of the mingling of races at the end of the twelfth century, but he restricted his comment to freemen. What he had to say may well have been true of London, but over the great mass of rural England there is little doubt that, for a long time to come, conquerors and conquered remained separate. At the top of the social scale, it is clear that the most powerful families married within the ranks of the baronage. At a somewhat lower social level, marriage between Normans and English took place but only as an exceptional event. The situation was to change only from the mid-fourteenth century onwards as a result of demographic shifts following upon the Black Death, not as the consequence of royal or baronial policies.

There was in fact no 'English' history for long after the Conquest. What is normally spoken of as 'English' political history during these centuries relates almost exclusively to controversy and conflict within the ascendancy. The Becket tragedy, Magna Carta, the baronial wars of the mid-thirteenth century were all essentially matters relating to the French-speaking elite. As Stubbs pointed out, the influence of French culture increased rather than diminished in the thirteenth century. A Frenchman, Simon de Montfort, played an active role in ascendancy politics during the thirteenth century. Edward II took his coronation oath in French. Henry de Beaumont, to whom Edward II gave the Isle of Man, was the son of Lewis de Brienne, viscount of Beaumont in Maine. His brother, the bishop of Durham, is recorded as having said on one occasion under stress: 'Par seynt Lewis, il ne fut pas curtays qui est parole icy escrit' ('By Saint Louis, the word written here is discourteous'). Under Henry III, French became the language of written law, and under Edward I the language of the courts of law. The continued strength of the ascendancy in spite of its internal division is indicated by the survival of such names as de Bohun, Bigod and Mortimer, dating from the Conquest.

The colonial nature of this society needs to be stressed if its true character is to be understood. The followers of William took great risks in the enterprise and their rewards were correspondingly great. Settlers continued to arrive well into the twelfth century, displacing English sub-tenants who had survived the first generation of conquest. For the younger sons of Norman families (and 'Norman' here must be understood to cover much of the north-western coastline of the continent, including Flanders) England was a 'frontier' which offered the chance of social advancement, a fact of which the historian Orderic Vitalis was well aware when he referred to those 'whom Henry had raised from the dust'. It was not uncommon for Norman lords to bring over tenants from their own estates. In modern terms, England resembled a Texas in which the Anglo-Saxons came to occupy second-class status. The Yankees in this case were the Normans.

Such a large-scale process of conquest and colonisation could hardly be successful without a continuing display of military force. Here lay the importance of the Norman castles (not 'English' castles as they are sometimes referred to). The function of the castle was the same in England, at least initially, as it was in the marcher lordships and elsewhere in the British Isles – to overawe a subject population. This may seem to be overstressing the obvious, but in most accounts of English history the key importance of the castle tends to be underplayed. Following the lead of the great nineteenth-century historians, modern scholars still concentrate

upon such facts of supposedly 'national' concern as Magna Carta. The castle exemplified the realities of local power. For the great majority living in the unfree condition of villeinage, it, not parliament or king, was the dominant institution in their daily lives.

The structure of the colonial aristocracy was never uniform, nor did it remain unchanged from 1066 to the mid-fourteenth century. On the marcher shires of the Welsh border and on the Scottish border from the late thirteenth century, defensive needs were uppermost and, as a consequence, lords needed manpower as much as income. In the east and south, there was no similar military need and as a consequence the military aspect of lordship declined, though it never disappeared. The popularity of tournaments (William Marshall took part in over 500), the Crusades, campaigns in France and the cult of chivalry all testify to the importance of the military ideal. As control of the colony came to be taken for granted, however, the economic exploitation of the landed estate took on greater significance. The growth of population from the twelfth century onwards, land-hunger and rising prices led the magnates to pay greater attention to the opportunities offered by the market.

These economic activities took several forms. On some estates, attention was concentrated upon raising rents or entry-fines (required when a tenant entered upon his holding). Others encouraged the 'colonisation' of new land from which they were now able to draw rent. In the thirteenth century, Roger Bigod brought tenants from his Norfolk estates to his newly acquired land in Ireland. Other lords took an active interest in demesne farming with the market directly in mind. The earl of Leicester owned vast herds of cows, and from such estates as his the towns of Boston and Lynn exported butter and cheese by the ton. This great rise in economic activity, associated especially with the thirteenth century, is often seen in 'national' terms as if it were 'English' cheese and bacon which was being exported. The great mass of the population, however, does not seem to have benefited. On many estates, landlords attempted to hold on to or even increase the labour services to which they were 'entitled'. If we are to follow Professor Postan's assessment (in *The Medieval Economy and Society* (1975)), the chief beneficiaries of this rise in economic activity were the great magnates. In contrast, the lesser baronage and gentry may have lost ground, a fact which would help to explain the restiveness of this class during the thirteenth century.

Colonialism was not confined to the secular world. It was to be seen also in the field of religion. Like many conquerors, the Normans felt that God was on their side. Walter Espec is reported as saying at the battle of the Standard, 'Why should we despair of victory when victory has been given to our race by the Most High, as it were in fee?' They also saw themselves

as reforming a decadent Church. A local, hereditary priesthood was to be replaced by a celibate clergy. Parishes were to be created as the basis of new communities, with tithes as their economic basis. Canon law was to be tightened up with regard to marriage. More churches were to be built. Rural areas were to be more actively evangelised. In all of this, the criterion of reform was to be decided by the new colonial rulers.

One instrument of change was a Normalised episcopate backed by the Crown. Of the sixteen English bishoprics, only one was not held by a 'Norman' at the end of the eleventh century. Professor Le Patourel has shown (in *The Norman Empire* (1976)) that well into the twelfth century the bishops of England were all foreign-born with the exception of two, born in England of Norman or Flemish extraction. The new departure was emphasised in some cases by a shift from an Anglo-Saxon site with traditional associations to a new site. Selsey, for example, linked with St Wilfred and the former kings of the south Saxons, gave way to Chichester.

Another instrument of Normalisation was the monastic order. Many English churches were donated to Norman or French monasteries. Over twenty Norman monasteries were recorded as possessing English manors by 1086. Soon, Norman and French monks were being invited over to England to take part in the work of reform. William de Warenne asked for Cluniac monks to found a house at Lewes. Other prominent monastic houses with a French affiliation were established at Chester, Tewkesbury and Evesham. The abbot of Glastonbury in the early twelfth century was the Norman Henry of Blois. Evesham also had a Norman abbot. Hugh of Avalon, who founded the first Carthusian house in England, came directly from La Grande Chartreuse. The introduction of the French-based Cistercian order into northern England took place under the auspices of Thurston, archbishop of York, who was born in Bayeux. The place which the monasteries enjoyed in the colonial ascendancy may go some way towards explaining their unpopularity at a later date.

How autonomous, then, were religious values within this colonial society? It would be clearly mistaken to see all members of the monastic order as exponents of a colonial ideology. At the level of bishops and abbots, however, Church and colony were closely connected, since both types of prelate were expected, as tenants in chief, to provide the Crown with its due quota of knights. Peterborough abbey, for example, was responsible for sixty knights and Glastonbury for forty. Also, the role of churchmen in administration was fundamental.

The Church in the first century after the Conquest could not have escaped the impress of its colonial situation even if it had wished to do so. Perhaps the real problem is to discover when the situation changed enough to allow the admittance of 'natives' into the higher echelons of

the Church. The coming of the Friars in the early thirteenth century seems to have marked something of a turning point. The Franciscans, in particular, drew upon lower social groups within the towns, which were more likely to be English-speaking than French-speaking. However, it was only with the rise of the Lollard movement in the late fourteenth century that an unmistakeably English religious movement appeared.

The third element in the colonial structure was the borough. During the years immediately after the Conquest, 'Norman' colonists were introduced into at least six towns, including Nottingham and Shrewsbury. More significant, however, is the fact that many new towns were established during the late eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Between 1066 and 1130, forty new towns were founded (not including eighteen in Wales). During the civil wars of Stephen's and Matilda's reign (1135–54), the rate slowed, but it picked up again in the second half of the twelfth century. During the period 1191–1230, nearly fifty new towns were planted. The creation of new towns was thus a remarkable feature of post-Conquest England and Wales.

In seeking an explanation for this phenomenon, historians have tended to stress the rise of trade. From this standpoint, the history of towns forms part of 'English' economic history and, as with 'English' castles and 'English' monasteries, so too there have been studies of 'English' towns. If we look at who founded these towns and why, it is clear that the initiative came mainly from the Norman colonial elite. Some towns, Newcastle, for example, were royal foundations but most owed their existence to the initiative of local lords.

The attraction of such institutions for the lords lay in the fact that towns were, in effect, controllable markets where the output of estates could be turned into cash. The rents which burgesses paid in a lord's town were another source of cash. Trade conducted within a town paid tolls. Mills were another source of income. Though the details of boroughs varied from place to place, the object remained the same, to add to the wealth of the colonial ascendancy. The earls of Gloucester acquired a quarter of their total income from the tolls of Bristol. Leicester provided the earls of Leicester with a third of their income. These were large and prosperous urban centres which had existed before the Conquest. More typical were towns of middling importance. The bishops of Worcester founded Stratford. The earls of Chester founded Stockport and Salford. Control of the town of Coventry was disputed between the local feudal and ecclesiastical lords. Under the auspices of the bishop of Norwich, the town of Lynn expanded (to be known first as Bishop's Lynn and then later as King's Lynn). Hugh de Gonneville founded the town of Chipping Camden as an outlet for the Cotswolds wool trade. The same

story was repeated many times, sometimes with success, sometimes with failure.

During this period, the towns of England were not independent manifestations of the commercial spirit, but sponsored institutions controlled by the colonial ascendancy. It was only when this started to decline in the second half of the fourteenth century that towns began to achieve some measure of independence. Maitland noted how 'in some great boroughs, seigniorial justice was a hardy plant' (in Sir Frederick Pollock and F. W. Maitland, *History of English Law* (1898), p. 646). He was referring to the situation in the town of Stamford in 1275, where various lords, ecclesiastical and secular, claimed rights over their tenants. But Stamford was typical at this date. At Stockport and Salford, the lord's steward presided over the borough assembly. At Tavistock, the abbot closely supervised the borough which the abbey had founded: the abbot's steward presided over the borough court, levied a percentage on corn ground at the town mill, collected inheritance dues and controlled various services due from 'his' burgesses. At Bury St Edmunds, the abbey wielded wide powers over the economic life of the borough, controlling its court and its market and collecting tolls. The abbey also enjoyed a considerable privilege, in that its own produce was exempt from tolls. It also took precedence in making purchases of grain.

Towns which had existed before the Conquest lost whatever autonomy they had possessed earlier. This may be seen most clearly in the shift in the control of urban churches. In such towns as Bristol, Stamford and Lincoln, churches had been built by local patrons. At Winchester, most of its fifty-six churches had been built in this way. After the Conquest, ownership was vested with the Norman bishop or with the local Normanised monastery. Thus at Leicester, the earl transferred six churches to his new foundation of Augustinian canons. In such an instance we may see how castle, monastery and borough formed a network of institutions supporting the colonial ascendancy.

There is, finally, the key institution of the manor, described by Professor Postan in *The Medieval Economy and Society* (1975) as 'the most powerful, the most ubiquitous and the most characteristic institution of medieval economy and society'. The manor may be seen as consisting of the lord's demesne, worked by an unfree labour force, which in turn for its services was allowed to cultivate its own holdings. Over much of England, it was associated with the so-called open fields in which the peasantry cultivated 'strips'. The economic arrangements of the manor, however, varied widely from place to place and from time to time. In 'Wessex', the tenants were more likely to be unfree than in East Anglia. The same person could pay rent for one holding and be required to pay

in labour for another. Rentals on manors in a newly colonised area were likely to be less onerous than those in more settled parts. Recent research also suggests that the tenants were often more mobile than was once supposed. In theory, the peasants were bound to the soil. In practice, the needs of a market economy often meant that some degree of flexibility was permitted by the bailiffs of the estate.

The Normans did not invent the manorial estate. Such estates were already well established in 1066. Indeed, some scholars suggest that their origins may have to be sought in the villas of late Roman Britain. What the Normans did do, however, was to develop the economic potentialities of the manor. Land and tenantry were exploited at a more intense level in an economy increasingly orientated towards the market. New land was brought into cultivation, often at the expense of peasants who had hitherto relied upon 'waste' for fuel or as grazing-land for pigs.

In the colonial situation which existed in England after the Conquest, it was not surprising that royal lawyers should work hard to sharpen a distinction between the 'natives' and the newcomers. By the thirteenth century, it was held in law that villeins could not bring cases to the royal courts. The 'common' law was in effect confined to the ascendancy and those associated with it. A royal writ (*de natiuo*) was devised to help in the repossession of natives who had fled their lord's estate. In the light of these realities, it is ironical that one of the classical works of historiography in the field should be known as *The History of English Law* (not 'Norman Law').

So far we have concentrated our attention upon the Norman elite, a mode of procedure which the great wealth of official records and the traditions of English historiography thrust upon the historian. In comparison with the amount of material relating to the ascendancy, evidence about the majority is minimal. What, then, can be said about them? It is tempting to assume that we are at last dealing with the 'English people'. The survival of regional dialects, however, suggests that local loyalties were still strong. During the Middle English period (1100–1450) earlier cultural divisions into Northumbria and Mercia (both with Danish minorities) and Wessex may be seen as surviving in the form of dialect areas, now known as 'Northern', 'Midlands' ('East' and 'West'), and 'Southern'. The south seems to have been more Normanised than the north, if the evidence of Norman loanwords is a safe guide. In the north-west, the incorporation of former Gaelic-Scandinavian areas and of Strathclyde south of Carlisle into the Norman colony meant that new sub-cultures now existed within 'England'. To these may be added Shropshire and Herefordshire, now part of the Norman kingdom but inhabited in their western sections by a population of Welsh background. In Herefordshire

the existence of the enclave of 'Archenfield' (Erging, in Welsh) with its own Welsh laws and language symbolised the cultural diversity of this area. There was, finally, Celtic-speaking Cornwall, which was incorporated into 'England', governmentally if not culturally.

As well as cultural diversity, there was considerable social differentiation within the majority. The basic unit of society was the vill (a term used to suggest something simpler and often smaller than the village) but, as modern research has shown, the relative poverty of these small-scale societies did not exclude differences of status and wealth. There were clear class divisions between richer and poorer peasants, and in the light of modern colonial societies it would be unwise to assume that common hatred for the foreign lord outweighed the bitterness of local conflict. Studies of nineteenth-century Ireland have shown how hostility between farmers and labourers could be more significant as a cause of violence than that between landlords and tenants.

There was, in the third place, the contrast between the relatively commercialised east and the more manorialised parts of England, particularly the west midlands and the southern counties. This was a distinction which went back to before the Conquest, but it seems to have become more marked in the post-Conquest period, as the growth of London and of the ports of the east coast indicates. In the west the rise of Bristol and of Chester point to the commercial development of the 'Irish Sea Province', as well as the new trading links with south-west France. By the mid-fourteenth century, the east coast and (in the west) the Bristol hinterland were the wealthiest regions of England. Such commercialisation makes it understandable how the dialect of the east midlands, with its centre at London, should become the language of the new society which emerged after the decline of the colonial ascendancy.

On the eve of the Norman Conquest of England, there were four major Welsh political units – Gwynedd in the north-west, Deheubarth in the south-west, Morganwg in the south to south-east and Powys in the east, surrounded by a number of smaller lordships over whose fate the dominant kingdoms contended. Some historians have been eager to see the rise of a Welsh national consciousness during the pre-Norman centuries, but there was little sign of unity. As a result of the divisions imposed by geography and by their different historical experiences, Gwynedd looked towards the Gaelic-Scandinavians of the Wirral and the Viking kingdom of Dublin, Deheubarth had been drawn at least spasmodically into the sphere of Wessex and the fortunes of Powys had been linked with Mercia. Despite these divisions, however, 'Wales' had survived the challenges of the Viking centuries. The west Saxon and Anglo-Danish kings had been content with asserting a general suzerainty over Wales, whenever this was

possible. With the coming of the Normans, however, a new period began, marked by military control and large-scale colonisation.

The full impact of the Normans was not felt immediately. William seems to have been content to establish control of the Welsh border-lands, with the probable aim of containing unrest in Mercia. At this date, the three great Norman earldoms of Chester, Shrewsbury and Hereford may be seen as largely defensive in character. In the last decades of the eleventh century, however, with the opportunity offered by the death of Rhys ap Tewdwr, king of Deheubarth (d. 1093), a more forward policy of conquest and colonisation began. The coast of south Wales with its easy access by sea from Devon was an inviting target for those younger sons who had missed earlier opportunities in England. In the north, an approach from the Dee estuary offered similar possibilities, though it was to be much less successful. Not until the campaigns of Edward I in the late thirteenth century was the kingdom of Gwynedd in the north finally brought under control.

The Norman Conquest of Wales is a dramatic story. What was less dramatic but equally significant was the process of colonisation which accompanied it. The first plantation of Flemish colonists took place in Pembrokeshire in the early twelfth century but the really decisive factor in the Norman success was the supply of English colonists. Much of Wales was mountainous but there were many substantial pockets of fertile land along the south coast and in the valleys of the Severn, the Usk and the Wye. In the north, the vale of Clwyd and the Isle of Anglesey were similar areas. Herefordshire, today a part of England, was another attractive target for the colonist. All these lands were to fall to English colonists during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The demographic upsurge which was so marked a feature of English society in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries provided the impetus behind the colonisation of Wales. Without the numerical backing of English tenants, it would have been impossible for the Normans to make the inroads which they did. By the early fourteenth century much of the best land in Wales was occupied by the Normans and their tenants. Each lordship had its 'Englishry' of good land, and its 'Welshry' of poorer land. In the one, the Norman law operated, in the other Welsh. A colonial society was delineated in Wales more clearly than anywhere else in the British Isles.

As in England, the combination of castle, borough and Church provided the framework around which Norman control was organised. Several hundred castles were built, mostly of the motte-and-bailey type. Castles, as at Chepstow, provided the nuclei towards which smaller castles could look for support. It was a sign of the hostile environment within

which the colonists operated that castles were much thicker on the ground in Wales than was the case in English counties, such as Somerset. Another sign was the *de facto* independence which the Crown permitted the lordships to enjoy. Royal law did not operate in the marcher lordships, which numbered about forty during the heyday of the colony.

Boroughs were also created to meet the needs of the castle and the settlers. Some of them, such as Cardiff and Monmouth, developed into fully fledged towns. Others, such as Whittington and Chirk, remained scarcely more than villages. In the later thirteenth century, Edward I established Flint and other boroughs as part of a conscious policy of colonisation. Though at a later period such towns became indubitably 'Welsh' in their outlook, to live in a town during the Norman period was a sign of belonging to the English colony. The Welsh were in fact excluded from them. The square towers of many urban churches were intended to serve a defensive function, and no new town was established far from the protection of a castle. The towns existed primarily to serve the needs of the 'Englishry'.

The Norman Conquest had a particularly marked effect upon the Welsh Church. In Wales there had been no equivalent of the English 'Tenth-Century Reformation' with its policies of centralisation. As in other areas of the Irish Sea Province, earlier patterns of local control based upon kinship groups had prevailed against a system based upon government by bishops. There were four Welsh bishoprics (St Davids, Llandaff, St Asaph and Bangor) but in the countryside episcopal surveillance counted for little against the entrenched traditions of abbeys with strong local roots, symbolised by an attachment to a local saint. In the Church, as in secular society, the kinship group was an enduring institution.

Wherever they established themselves, the Normans almost immediately 'reformed' this system out of existence. At Brecon, where he established a castle, Bernard of Neufmarche established a monastic cell linked to Battle Abbey (Sussex). West of Cardiff, Richard of Granville set up a monastery of Neath linked with the French order of Savigny. Other lords became patrons of monastic houses linked with Le Mans and Saumur. Another maintained ties with Glastonbury. (In parts of Wales less affected by Norman pressure, local kings established Cistercian monasteries with similar 'reforms' in mind.) In Norman-controlled Wales, the Church became closely identified with the 'Englishry'. This was as true of the bishoprics as of the monasteries. The see of Glamorgan had been 'anglicised' for some time before the Conquest, but the see of St David had been completely Welsh. After the Conquest, both bishoprics were reorganised on lines acceptable to the newcomers.

There was, finally, the manor, with the accompanying nucleated settlements and open-field system. Within the 'Englishry' of the various lordships, the presence of the new colonists was marked by agrarian arrangements characteristic of England not Wales. The main difference lay in the fact that such land was held from a lord in return for services rendered, and not by virtue of membership of a kinship group in return for reciprocal services. Enjoying better land, thanks to the backing of their lords, the Englishry could regard itself as superior to the Welshry. Outside the immediate circle of the lord's control, however, Welsh custom based upon partible inheritance continued to be practised. Also, customary law relating to the feud (*galanas*) and the principle of compensation to relatives for a crime committed against one of the kindred's members survived in many areas. Marcher lords themselves were willing to enforce the law of *galanas* in the Welshries in return for a fee.

A distinction may be drawn between the early colonisation of Wales in the immediate post-Conquest period and the later, more centralised attempt to colonise Gwynedd during the reign of Edward I. Gwynedd had succeeded in maintaining its autonomy during the twelfth century and much of the thirteenth, though at the cost of its rulers formally accepting the overlordship of the English king. A period of relative independence during the baronial wars of the mid-thirteenth century was followed eventually by defeat at the hands of Edward I. In 1282 Llywelyn of Gwynedd died in battle and his brother David was executed a year later. In 1284 Edward held a 'parliament', as a result of which the Norman criminal law enforced by Norman-style sheriffs was introduced into the three shires which now constituted the former kingdom of Gwynedd.

As in the south, the classical combination of castle, borough and Church was relied upon to provide the framework of the colony. Edward's castles at each end of the Menai Straits and down the coast at Harlech still stand as a monument to his policy. More effective, at least at first, were the newly founded boroughs of Flint, Denbigh, Holt, Rhuddlan and Ruthin. These are thoroughly Welsh today but they were originally intended to be islands of colonial privilege in the Welsh countryside. Welshmen were forbidden to live within them and were excluded from taking an active part in their trading activities. A policy of plantation was also adopted in connection with these boroughs and as a consequence good land in the vale of Clwyd was confiscated for the benefit of new settlers while the Welsh were 'compensated' with poorer land on the hillsides. The Greys of Ruthin were one of the families who benefited from their part in this colonisation.

The Statute of Rhuddlan, which was drawn up under Edward's guidance, made clear that colonisation and 'civilisation' were thought to go hand in hand. Edward saw himself as retaining certain good customs of the Welsh while abandoning those like *galanas* and fosterage which seemed undesirable. Archbishop Pecham of Canterbury, who regarded *galanas* as a travesty of justice, also wished to reform Welsh custom with regard to marriage and legitimacy. In theory, this should not have led to discrimination. In fact, Englishmen settling in Wales were often promised that they would be tried only by Englishmen, if accused of a crime. Welshmen were often prohibited from buying land held on English tenure without the licence of the lord concerned.

The Welsh castles of Edward I reveal the extent of his imperialism. Of the major castles which were to be built along the Welsh coast, Caernarfon was singled out for particular emphasis as a symbol of empire. The site itself was the Segontium of the Romans. The bailey of the late-eleventh-century castle was retained as a reminder of the early years of the Normans. The Eagle Tower of the castle was intended to recall Constantinople. Finally, the queen made a special journey to Caernarfon in order that her son Edward should be born there. In the context of the history of the British Isles, Edward I appears as much the English Augustus as the English Justinian.

Unfortunately for this imperial vision, the demographic conditions which might have made it possible did not survive the first quarter of the fourteenth century. Traditional institutions of kinship were still to be found in Gwynedd (now part of the principality of Wales), and other areas such as Clun which did not feel the full brunt of colonisation, into the fifteenth century and beyond. The three political units of the pre-Conquest period each had different historical experiences. Deheubarth and the south had been most affected by colonisation. Powys had faced a more peaceful penetration. Gwynedd had not been affected fully until the late thirteenth century. Beneath the Norman ascendancy, distinctive cultures still existed.

The Norman Conquest of Wales was to have an indirect effect on Ireland as well as England. An invasion of Ireland may have been planned in the late eleventh century. It took place in fact in the late twelfth, when Normans who had taken an active part in the Conquest of south Wales crossed the Irish Sea. The descendants of Gerald of Windsor, the steward of the earl of Pembroke, became the FitzGeralds of Munster. In due course the Irish Sea Province became part of a Norman empire in the British Isles. The lords of the Welsh marches also played an important role in English politics from the twelfth century onwards. With military

Figure 18.   *The great motte of Urr*
The great motte of Urr (Kirkcudbrightshire) was built by the Normans
to control Galloway in the south of Scotland, an area which earlier was
under Viking dominance. Similar Norman mottes are an indication of
the extent of Norman power throughout the British Isles, including
much of the south of Ireland.

forces at their disposal, they were always in a position to intervene in
England, should they be called upon to do so. Indeed the part which
they and Llywelyn played in the wars of Simon de Montfort probably
persuaded Edward to adopt a more active policy towards Wales.

Scotland, like Wales and Ireland, was very much a 'geographical expres-
sion' at the end of the eleventh century. Broadly speaking, it appears
divided into an Irish Sea province and a North Sea province, though the
distinction must not be pressed too hard in view of the fact that Norway

controlled Shetland, Orkney, the islands of Lewis and Skye and the Isle of Man. The Inner Hebrides had in the early twelfth century been formed into a kingdom by Somerled (d. 1164) and his descendants continued to rule the area. Galloway, closely tied to the north of Ireland, was ruled by Gaelic-Scandinavians, whose power south of the Solway had given way before the expanding Canmore monarchy. It is difficult to be certain about the political and social arrangements of the Gaelic-speaking lordships but it would seem that a kinship system still survived, modified by feudal ties between lord and vassal. The Vikings who colonised Argyll and the Isles became gaelicised, and took over Gaelic forms of legitimation. Donald and Dougall, the sons of Somerled, used the Gaelic patronymic 'Mac' (son of) which came to be the basis of the MacDonald and Mac-Dougall clans. But the stone castles, which were built at key anchorages in this seaborne society, pointed to the influence of ideas which were not very far removed from those of the Normans.

The Irish Sea province looked towards the western seas and for some time after the Norman Conquest of England was to be left to its own devices. It was the North Sea province of 'Scotland' which was drawn first into the Norman sphere of influence. The reigns of David I (1124–53) and of William IV (the Lion, 1165–1214) were decisive here. Where Malcolm Canmore had been largely concerned with extending his influence into what had been Bernicia and was now northern Northumbria, his sons and grandson moved north into Gaelic-speaking Moray and Buchan and south-west into Galloway. This could hardly have been successful without the support of the Normans. The kings of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were, all in their different ways, dependent upon the Norman kings. Without this support the rise of Edinburgh to political importance is difficult to explain. A Norman ascendancy was thus established in Scotland but more indirectly than was the case in Wales or Ireland.

The instruments of Normanisation were the same as those employed elsewhere in the British Isles – castle, borough and reformed Church. It has been estimated that there were twenty-eight mottes in Annandale, twenty-six between the Nith and the Cree and eleven to the west of the Cree – well over fifty in the south-west alone. Some of these mottes, like the motte of Urr, were major undertakings. In addition to these baronial castles, there were royal castles, such as those at Stirling and Inverness. The building of castles in such numbers makes clear what may not be apparent at first sight, that the establishment of the Canmore dynasty rested upon the fact of conquest; however, traditionally, historians have preferred to see it in terms of 'the making of a kingdom' according to the 'best European models'.

Resistance to the newcomers continued for some considerable time. In the late twelfth century, and in the early thirteenth, risings took place in the north-east in the name of MacWilliam, the presumed son of Duncan II. The Normans took these risings sufficiently seriously publicly to beat out the brains of a supposed MacWilliam female infant in the square at Falkirk.

In Galloway, the practice known as *surdit de serjeant* illustrates the conflict which existed between notions of justice derived from kinship obligation in the feud (*galnes* in Cumbric) and royal justice dispensed from above. *Surdit de serjeant* empowered the royal officers (serjeants) to indict those whom they suspected of being criminals and to hang them if caught red-handed. Unfortunately we know little about this type of law enforcement at the local level. The experience of such royal justice, however, may go some way towards explaining the continued restiveness of Galloway under the new regime. The Viking background of Gallowegan culture must also have been a factor.

As elsewhere in the British Isles, the Norman borough played a crucial role in the working of the Norman ascendancy. The aim was to establish local trading monopolies which could levy tolls and hence raise cash for their owners, whether king or local baron. Many boroughs, such as those of Renfrew and Prestwick, were founded by local barons, but most, in keeping with the prominent role played by the Scottish Crown in the changes of the twelfth century, were royal. Such ventures are frequently depicted as part of an enlightened commercial policy designed to develop trade, but the complaints made by the monks of the Isle of May about their loss of freedom in selling fish as a result of the establishment of a royal borough indicate that changes were not always regarded as reforms. As was the case in Wales and Ireland, the new boroughs were often mini-colonies of Flemish or English immigrants dependent upon the king or their lord for survival. The names mentioned in borough records are overwhelmingly foreign at this date. Thus, taken in conjunction with the restrictions which were imposed upon the movement of the peasant population, the boroughs appear as part of a system of regulation imposed from above.

There was, moreover, the reform-minded Church which also occupied a prominent place in the process of Normanisation. The picture emerges most clearly in the north-east, where Viking traditions were strong. Here, new dioceses were created for Moray, Ross and Caithness. These were the ecclesiastical counterparts of the earldoms now under royal control. In Moray, the royal burgh at Elgin became the site of a cathedral which was built in the thirteenth century. This new centralised structure of Church government brought a new bureaucracy into existence, together with a

system of Church courts, to replace the loosely organised system of local churches in which kinship groups had been dominant. Hundreds of parish churches were eventually established, each, in theory at least, staffed by a priest whose livelihood depended upon the collection of 'teinds' (tithes). The introduction of new monastic orders was also a feature of the first half of the twelfth century, thanks to the extraordinary zeal of King David I. The monastery at Holyrood was staffed with monks from Merton in England and the abbey at Jedburgh with monks from Beauvais. The new monasteries, staffed by foreigners and often committed to expanding revenues for building purposes, admirably fulfilled the purposes of the ascendancy. We can only guess at the local response to their foundation.

By the end of the twelfth century all the elements of a Norman ascendancy were in place in the east and south of Scotland. During the course of the next century, Alexander II (1214–49) and Alexander III (1249–86) attempted with some success to bring the west under the control of the monarchy. By the late thirteenth century, the Stewart family, with its castle at Rothesay in Bute, was the most powerful Norman family in this area. Alexander II challenged the authority of Norway in the Isles, but his unexpected death brought expansion to an end for a time. In 1266, after a struggle in the course of which a Norwegian fleet was dispersed by a storm (1264), the kings of Norway agreed to convey the sovereignty of the Isles, including the Isle of Man, to the kings of Scotland. The MacDougalls and MacDonalds also came to terms with Alexander III.

In 1278, when Alexander III was compelled to go to Westminster to do homage to Edward I, the Norman ascendancy within the British Isles seemed secure. In 1286, however, as a result of the unexpected death of Alexander III without a male heir, new problems began to appear. The Norman lords in Scotland agreed to accept the 'Maid of Norway', Alexander's granddaughter, as queen, but her death in 1290 brought to a head a struggle for power which had been brewing for some years.

The main protagonists in the struggle were the factions of Bruce and Comyn, each with its candidate. The Bruce candidate was Robert Bruce of Annandale; the candidate of the Comyns was John Balliol, brother-in-law of the Comyn baron, and a new arrival in Scotland. In due course, with Edward I's active participation as the overlord of many of those involved, the court which had been appointed to decide gave its verdict in favour of Balliol. In 1292 Balliol became king, with the support of over half of his fellow magnates. There was little trouble until 1294, when Edward called upon his vassals to aid him in defending Gascony against the attacks of the French. Edward's magnates in England were reluctant to do so, and it is not surprising that John Balliol and his supporters should

also refuse. Edward's response was to make war in the Scottish Lowlands and to treat with unusual severity any of his opponents who might be captured. William Wallace (whose name with its 'Welsh' overtones recalls the old British kingdom of Strathclyde) rose in the name of King John and enjoyed some success before being captured and executed in 1304. Comyn and Bruce already had made peace with Edward in 1301. When in 1306 Robert Bruce quarrelled with John Comyn in the Greyfriars church at Dumfries and stabbed him to death, it looked as if Edward had little to fear in the future, despite the fact that Bruce had himself crowned at Scone. Edward's death in 1307, however, and the weakness of his successor in the face of baronial opposition, made it possible for Bruce to survive and eventually, in 1314, to defeat his enemies at Bannockburn, near Stirling.

Confusion is often caused by the use of the concepts 'English' and 'Scottish' in dealing with these events. In fact, issues of national identity have little place in a situation which at the highest political level was dominated by ideas of lordship and vassalage. What occurred in the years following 1294 was not a conflict between 'England' and 'Scotland' (though it became so later) but a struggle for power within the Norman ascendancy. As such, it was little different from the civil wars of the mid-century. The contenders in the struggle, with the exception of Wallace, were all of 'Norman' extraction. Balliol and Bruce (the elder) had been taken prisoner at the battle of Lewes in 1264, fighting for Henry III against Simon de Montfort. Comyn had taken the side of Simon and Llywelyn of Wales. A structure of politics which allowed this to occur took little account of national aspirations. When Bruce was proclaimed king at Scone, the three areas which took sides against him, Buchan, Galloway and Argyll (with their distinctive cultures), were precisely those in which the Canmore dynasty had had most difficulty in establishing its authority. Bruce's support came from his fellow-Normans, and not all of them. Those who gave him their support took their stand against a king who seemed to have shifted his position from that of feudal overlord to one of imperial dominance. Edward I was the revolutionary. They were the traditionalists, defending the local autonomy to which they felt themselves entitled.

Concentration upon the political activity of the Normans tends to distract attention from the fate of the various sub-cultures which co-existed in Scotland in the eleventh century. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, Gaelic was clearly in retreat, except in the west. Its place had been taken by English in the form of the Lothian dialect. The elite spoke French but, below that level, English took over. Why this should be so is not very clear. It may be due to a number of factors, including sponsored

colonisation from the Lowlands, of a kind which led to the anglicisation of parts of south and east Wales. After two centuries of Norman ascendancy, the five sub-cultures of Scotland had given way to three, English in the east, Gaelic in the west and Scandinavian in Shetland and Orkney. The latest casualty was Gaelic-speaking Buchan which did not recover from the 'harrying' it received at the hands of the newly crowned Bruce.

Unlike the Norman infiltration of Scotland during the twelfth century, the coming of the Normans to Ireland was sudden and dramatic. On 1 May 1169 a small contingent of Norman knights landed at Bannow Bay near Wexford. A year later a larger force led by Richard FitzGilbert, earl of Pembroke, landed at Waterford. Dublin fell to the Normans in 1171, and soon the two Irish kingdoms of Leinster and Midhe were in Norman hands. In 1171 King Henry II visited Ireland and accepted the homage of both the conquistadores and of many of the Irish chiefs. He also, in an act of far-sighted policy, established royal castles in Dublin, Waterford, Cork and Limerick. Throughout the feudal period these were to remain symbols of a Crown 'presence' in Ireland. Soon, much of Ireland was overrun by the Normans. In 1175 the Norman newcomer de Cogan (a name which survives as 'Goggins' in modern Ireland) and his followers conquered most of the MacCarthy kingdom of Desmond. In 1177 John de Courcy marched north and seized much of north-east Ulster. Parts of Thomond also fell under Norman control. Connacht west of the Shannon was spared for a time, thanks to the political skill of its O Connor king, Cathal Crobhderg, who negotiated successfully with Henry II and his successors. Much of Connacht too, however, had been taken over by the mid-thirteenth century. Some of these successes proved to be temporary, most notably in the Shannon area, but much of the best land in the east changed hands permanently. Ireland indeed had suffered the same fate as England, Wales, the Scottish Lowlands and other parts of western Europe. The 'blitzkrieg' was not without its horrors. In 1170, for example, by the orders of the Norman commanders seventy citizens of Waterford were thrown from a cliff into the sea after their legs had been broken.

In Scotland the colonists derived legitimacy from the invitation of King David I. In Ireland they legitimised their invasion on the basis of the invitation from their Irish ally Diarmaid MacMurrough, king of Leinster. It was Diarmaid who in effect called in the new world to redress the balance of the old. His aim, as revealed in the years before 1169, was to extend the power of the Leinster kingdom from the Scandinavian towns of Dublin, Wexford and Waterford to the Shannon where Ossory was under his control, and from the southern borders of Munster to the Boyne where the ailing kingdom of Midhe was an obvious prize. These ambitions led him into rivalry with the Shannon powers of Connacht and Breifne and

in the power struggle which occurred in the 1160s he came off worst. Forced into exile in 1166, Diarmaid's request for help from the Normans was something of a gambler's throw. Henry II himself had enough on his hands with the problems of his own Angevin empire in France and England and showed little enthusiasm for the prospect. It was among the Norman feudatories of south Wales that Diarmaid found support. And the fact that they acted to some extent in defiance of the Crown was to have long-term consequences. The Norman conquistadores always felt that they were independent of royal control. Indeed it was not until the reign of Henry VIII that the title 'king of Ireland' was officially adopted by the Crown. Throughout the medieval period the kings of England were merely 'lords' of Ireland. Nonetheless, royal authority, at least in the thirteenth century, was very much a reality.

Diarmaid also gave an additional cover of legality to the enterprise by arranging for the marriage of Strongbow to his daughter Aoife, though such an arrangement carried little weight in traditional Irish law. In their own eyes, however, the Normans now had a claim to the kingdoms of Leinster and Midhe. Religious reform added a further card to play. Diarmaid was a 'reforming' king who had founded monasteries and had been in contact by letter with the great St Bernard himself. The Norman episcopate in England could be relied upon to support their king. The Pope, Alexander III, also looked upon the newcomers as agents of reform. But, in essentials, the coming of the Normans to Ireland involved a conquest, with consequences as unmistakeable as that by the Teutonic knights in east Prussia.

What were the consequences of the coming of the Normans? This is an issue which still deeply divides Irish historians. Eoin MacNeill (in *Phases of Irish History* (1919)) looked upon the invasion as a wholly negative episode as a result of which the development of Irish nationhood was set back for centuries. More recently, Professor Binchy (in *Proceedings of the Dublin Congress of Celtic Studies* (1962)) has argued strongly in favour of regarding the Viking invasions rather than the Norman Conquest as the crucial turning point in Irish history. There is also a 'revisionist' school of Irish historians which stresses the positive contribution made by the Normans in some areas. Professor F. X. Martin, for example, has argued that the Normans made possible the introduction of parliamentary institutions into Ireland. Professors Aubrey Gwynn and John A. Watt have seen the Normans as completing the movement of reform in the Irish Church. H. G. Richardson stressed the role of the Normans in bringing Ireland into the mainstream of European culture and though, as we have seen earlier, the Romanesque architecture of the early and mid-twelfth century indicates that pre-Norman Ireland was not isolated,

Goddard Orpen, in the standard work on the Normans in Ireland, pre-judged the whole issue by entitling his first chapter 'Anarchic Ireland'. The interpretation which I adopt here is nearest to that of Eoin MacNeill, though not without some reservations.

If what has been said earlier is well founded, the Normans did not intro-duce feudalism. From the tenth century onwards, Irish kings had con-quered territories, built castles, exacted oaths of fealty from vassals and used 'religious reform' to extend their control of newly acquired areas. The punishments inflicted by Irish kings upon the recalcitrant included blinding and the cutting off of hands and feet. The education of these kings was modelled upon a warrior ethic similar to that of the Normans.

In Ireland as elsewhere these new attitudes clashed with traditional attitudes towards the rights of kindred. Even before the Conquest, kings in Ireland were trying to enforce a regnal succession from father to son. Kings, like bishops, found an ideological basis for this in the idea of patriarchal authority. Well before the Norman Conquest parts of Ireland were moving towards a 'modernising' pattern.

It is clear, however, that external conquest by newcomers of a dif-ferent language and culture and with different assumptions about the role of law brought more far-reaching consequences in its train than internal conquest by those possessing the same language and culture. The former kingdom of Midhe, for example, which was the product of many centuries of political evolution, stretching back to the shad-owy Niall of the Nine Hostages in the fifth century, was transformed into the 'Liberty' of Meath. ('Liberty' was a technical term under Nor-man law for a lordship held from the Crown under which the lord had the right to enforce law and order, with the exception of certain pleas reserved for the Crown courts.) 'Midhe' ceased to exist, except in the memory of the conquered. Meath was now a fief held from the English Crown by Hugh de Lacy in return for the service of 100 knights. De Lacy's castle at Skryne, overlooking the ancient site at Tara, symbolised the dominance of the new order. His vassals, among whom were num-bered Petit, Pippard, Tyrell and Rochfort, held their own fiefs as part of the feudal pyramid. A gigantic simplification had taken place. The complexities of an older political culture, with its myths and genealo-gies, had been relegated to obscurity. The Irish language itself became a mark of servitude within the Norman-controlled area. 'Hibernicus' and 'villein' were synonymous. The coming of the Normans, far more than the coming of the Vikings, marked a social revolution, at least in eastern Ireland.

Institutions which had been associated with the traditional order found no place within the new society. Thus, the Norman bishop of Meath,

Simon de Rochfort, centralised his diocese upon the new fortified town of Trim. In the process, the older centres of Clonard and Fore, with their cults of the early Irish saints Finnian and Fechin, were downgraded. It may well be that Bishop Simon's motives were mixed and that he saw himself as undertaking genuine religious reform, but the result was to place the Church in Meath firmly behind the new order. Within the Norman-controlled areas, Irish hereditary learned families ceased to have an economic base. Bards and brehons also lost their elite status in this part of Ireland although they probably survived at a popular level. Clearly, Irish culture in these areas received as profound a shock as Anglo-Saxon culture did in England after the Norman Conquest of 1066.

It was as much by colonisation as by conquest, however, that the Normans revolutionised eastern Ireland. Marc Bloch (in *Feudal Society* (1961)) looked upon colonial settlement as one of the features which distinguished the second phase of feudalism from the first. In this the Irish experience formed part of a general European pattern, which derived from population pressures and land-hunger. The same forces, indeed, which led the Germans to establish colonies beyond the Elbe led the 'Franks' into south Wales, the Scottish Lowlands and the east of Ireland. How many colonists came in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries will never be known, but the incidence in east Leinster of such surnames as 'Walsh' (viz., Welsh), 'English', 'French' and 'Fleming' provides some indication of their numbers. We have a better sense as to why they came. Some at least were drawn to a strange land by the prospect of holding land by free tenure. A number of place-names incorporating 'burgage' or 'borris' provide evidence of this phenomenon (for example, Borris, Co. Carlow). Burgage tenure was in fact free tenure. Direct pressure from Norman lords in England probably also played a part in 'encouraging' emigration. The Norfolk manors of Roger Bigod, who was lord of Carlow as well as earl-marshal of England, show high rates of emigration during this period.

Once the initial military successes were over, the story was that of painstaking colonisation, particularly of the river valleys of Cos. Wexford, Waterford and Meath. In Wexford, settlers moved up the valley of the Slaney. In Waterford, they colonised the valley of the Barrow from New Ross to Carlow, the Nore valley up to Kilkenny and beyond, and the Suir valley from Carrick to Clonmel and Cahir. In Meath, they followed the course of the Boyne from Drogheda through Navan and Trim to Edenderry. Each stage of the advance was marked by the building of mottes and baileys, walled towns, stone castles and monasteries. Historians and archaeologists have still to examine the chronology of this

process, but it seems likely that the valleys of the Boyne, the Barrow and the Nore were the first areas of colonisation followed later by the less accessible valleys of the Slaney and Suir.

Cultivation and clearance of land on this scale was something new in Irish history. The three-field system, with its division into strips cultivated with the heavy plough, probably made its first appearance in Ireland at this time. There was thus an important new economic aspect to the Norman Conquest. The tillage of the heavy soil of the river valleys could not have taken place without a new expertise. Overall, however, the military aspect seems to have been dominant. Great stone castles at Trim, Carlow, Kilkenny, Cahir and elsewhere were the key centres of the new order. The garrisons of these castles provided protection for the settlers and in return received their agricultural surplus. Towns also had an important military function. The Norman settlements at Trim, Thomastown and elsewhere resembled similar Norman foundations at Flint, Denbigh and Rhuddlan in north Wales. In Wales, the natives were (at least in theory) excluded from these towns. In Ireland, the same rule seems to have been applied. In Wales such towns became the target for attack from a resentful countryside. So, too, in Ireland, such towns as Carlow suffered a similar fate at the hands of the MacMurroughs, when these erstwhile allies of the Normans turned against them.

The Church itself played an active military role in some areas. Medieval historians have largely ignored the part played by the military order of the Templars and the Knights Hospitallers of St John in the Conquest of Ireland. Most numerous among the religious orders during the post-Conquest period were the Augustinian canons with well over a hundred houses. Between them, the Templars and the Hospitallers accounted for at least twenty and possibly as many as sixty. Their role was by no means negligible. The military-style architecture of the monastery at Kells (Co. Kilkenny) speaks far more eloquently about the role of the Church in this area than any written sources. Other monastic houses such as the Cistercian monastery at Dunbrody (Co. Wexford) served the needs of the colonists. The archbishopric of Dublin was also very much a part of the military establishment, with castles at Swords and Tallaght. Statues of knights in the cloisters of Jerpoint abbey (Co. Kilkenny) make the same point about the place of the Church in colonial Ireland.

From the beginning, indeed, the Church was committed to the support of the Conquest, though ecclesiastical historians often lose sight of this fact by isolating Church history from history at large. Bishops were now royal tenants in chief with military obligations. The bishop of Limerick, for example, was responsible for maintaining the king's peace as a secular judge. Reorganisation of cathedral chapters in the name of reform enabled

prebends to be held by royal or other nominees who were not obliged to reside. Churchmen also played a key role in the royal administration, and did not always avoid the seamy side of politics. Recent research has shown the close involvement of Stephen of Fulbourn, bishop of Waterford, in the assassination of the two MacMurrough brothers at the end of the thirteenth century, an incident which did not prevent his later promotion to the archbishopric of Tuam. Another interesting ecclesiastical figure was the military-minded bishop of Ossory who carried the Host about with him on the grounds that any attack on his person would become by definition an act of sacrilege. There is no reason to think, however, that the role of the Church was any different in Ireland after the Conquest from what it was in England, Wales and Scotland. Monastic historians mesmerised by 'bare, ruined choirs' have tended to overlook the way in which castles, cathedrals and monasteries formed part of a single colonial complex, in which French-speaking culture was dominant.

In Munster the Conquest was signalled unmistakeably by the building of a large Gothic church on the Rock of Cashel, completely overshadowing Cormac's Chapel. In Dublin the Normans built a Gothic cathedral and dedicated it to St Patrick, thus attempting, as others had done before, to control the saint for their own purposes. At Durrow, Hugh de Lacy attempted to use the stones of the old monastic site to build a castle and was struck down for his pains. At Lismore a castle was built upon the site of the ancient monastery. Other important monastic centres of the traditional order – Emly, Clonmacnoise and Terryglass, which had been active in the first half of the century – were allowed or encouraged to decay. At Fore the older monastery was replaced by a house of Augustinian canons.

Resistance, when it came, was not from these older foundations but from Cistercian monasteries in the valleys of the Boyne and Barrow, where the reform movement had made some headway before the Norman Conquest. Trouble arose at Mellifont, Bective (near Trim) and Jerpoint in the early years of the thirteenth century and had become sufficiently serious by 1211 to warrant the appointment of an official investigation by the Cistercian order. The mission was carried out by Stephen of Lexington, a Norman cleric linked by close family ties with Henry III's administration. As might have been anticipated, the result went against the Irish monks. It was ordered that only French and Latin, and not Irish, should be spoken within these houses. The various monasteries with Irish monks were placed under French or Anglo-Norman supervision. Overall the effect was to undermine still further the position of Irish-speaking institutions within the Norman orbit.

It would be an oversimplification to suggest that the clergy both higher and lower were drawn completely from the ranks of the conquerors. The role of the Crown in ecclesiastical appointments, however, did place the newcomers in a strong position in such sees as Dublin and Meath and the southern half of the archdiocese of Armagh. The amalgamation of the traditional see of Glendalough with Dublin (1216) and the transference of the see of Clonard to Trim (1202) were carried out in the name of reform but clearly benefited the urban partners. With their insistence upon clerical celibacy and stricter adherence to canon law concerning marriage, the Normans had another weapon in their armoury, the reforming papacy of Innocent III. Though the whole topic requires further investigation, it seems likely also that the Normans dedicated their churches to the Holy Trinity, the Virgin Mary or to saints with a wider reputation than those enjoyed by the more localised Irish saints. Churches dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul, St Anne, St Thomas, St Mary, St Michael and St David are examples of this tendency. St Audouen's in Dublin was a Norman foundation. Here again, however, as we have seen earlier, the Normans had been anticipated by the O Connors, the O Briens, the MacMurroughs and other Irish kings.

The oldest traditions did not disappear overnight. Many of the Irish cults survived at a popular level, kept alive by the observance of feast days, visits to local wells, the holding of 'patterns' (patrons) in honour of local saints and perhaps also by the belief in the greater efficacy of prayers to Irish saints. At Ardmore near Waterford, for example, devotion to St Declan flourished for many centuries after the coming of the Normans. It is perhaps not inappropriate to see the Norman clergy in Ireland as an Established Church in a world of Irish-speaking dissenters, divided from them by culture and tradition as well as by economic and political status. There seems little doubt that the outlook of the Norman theologian Richard FitzRalph, who taught at 'Drawda Hall', Oxford, was poles apart from the *mentalité* of rural Meath, though he was born at Drogheda, in the same county.

Outside the areas of direct Norman control, the elite status of the Irish language survived and with it the traditional hereditary professions of bards, brehons and historians. Some hereditary families were driven from one part of Ireland only to take refuge in another. Thus the O Clerys (Ua Cleirigh) moved from near Galway to Mayo. The Duignans (Ua Duibhgennain), originally from Clonmacnoise, settled in Leitrim and Roscommon. The Wards (Maic an Bhaird), formerly hereditary poets to the O Kellys in the Athlone area (Uí Mhaine), became bards to the O Donnells in Donegal. The Maic Conmidhe became poets to the O Neills.

The O Breslins were poets to the Maguires. Actual possession of land in some areas was slow to change hands, and it has been suggested that many such families survived as erenaghs (*airchinnigh*) or lay stewards of lands belonging to traditional monastic foundations. On Devenish Island and Boa Island (Co. Fermanagh) such traditional monastic communities existed side by side with newer foundations.

Irish cultural institutions did not disappear, but they were probably placed on the defensive. Many of the manuscripts which survive are compilations. For better or worse the *Book of Invasions* (*Lebor Gabala*) seems to have achieved canonical status at this time as a record of an Irish past contrasting with that of the Normans. In the field of law the text of the *Senchas Mar* continued to be copied but its original meaning had been lost, not to be recovered until the twentieth century (and then with extreme difficulty). The brehons were carrying on a legal tradition which they did not fully understand. The tradition of keeping annalistic chronicles was maintained, however, and stories around the figure of Fionn MacCumhail multiplied, thus ensuring at a popular level the survival of a version of the remote Irish past. Fionn was in some measure the Irish equivalent of King Arthur, a Celtic leader whose existence implied a pre-Conquest past.

As elsewhere in the British Isles, a particularly sharp contrast existed between the outlooks of conquerors and conquered in the field of law. The Normans assumed that in matters of inheritance the appropriate pattern was from father to son. Irish traditions, though changing to some extent at the royal level in response to a new model of kingship, still stressed the rights of kindred. Such differences did not originate in racial origins nor were they unique to Ireland. They were indeed cultural in origin. As Professor Le Roy Ladurie (in 'Family Structures and Inheritance Customs in Sixteenth-Century France', in Jack Goody, Joan Thirsk and E. P. Thompson, eds., *Family and Inheritance* (1976)) has shown in relation to France and the Netherlands during this period, profound differences existed between north-east and north-west France about the rights enjoyed by fathers in the disposal of property. This was not a matter of light and darkness, as historians brought up within a narrow English common-law tradition tend to assume. Rather it originated in profoundly different ways of looking at ends and means. In a father–king-centred paradigm such as the Normans brought with them to Ireland, the kindred and the sons were legally disadvantaged. In the Norman scheme of things, the tendency was towards 'primogeniture' (the right of the eldest son to inherit at the expense of all other claims); entail (the process of controlling inheritance over several generations by a decision of the existing landholder); and the disposal of personal property by will by a father

Figure 19. *Chepstow Castle*
The Norman castle at Chepstow, with its priory and town at the mouth
of the River Wye, controlled entry into south Wales. It is some 10 miles
distant from Caerwent, the former Roman capital of the area, associated
with the Silures.

who might conceivably ignore any claims upon his property. In Norman-
controlled areas those assumptions tended to prevail, since they had the
backing of the Crown and the common-law courts. Thus the FitzGeralds
consistently adhered to primogeniture. In Irish-controlled areas the clash
between old and new continued for several centuries. The chronicles reg-
ularly refer to conflicts over succession which often seem to originate in
a clash between these two approaches.

In criminal law Norman emphasis was upon retribution. Thus hanging for theft became a routine penalty. In some Irish areas thieves might well receive exemplary punishment, but the tradition of compensation and of kinship responsibility survived until the seventeenth century. Here again this was not a contrast between civilisation and barbarism, though the Normans tended to see it that way, but a clash between two legal systems organised on different principles. A similar clash existed in the field of ecclesiastical law where Norman views on clerical marriage, polygamy, marriage between prohibited degrees and illegitimacy contrasted with Irish traditions. The struggle between the two was not to be resolved for many centuries. Ecclesiastical historians, however, have perhaps been too ready to take the side of the self-styled reformers.

The gulf which existed between these two legal worlds was not totally unbridged. Five royal lineages (Ua Néill of Ulster, Ua Mael Shechnaill of Meath, Ua Conchobair of Connacht, Ua Briain of Munster, and MacMurrough of Leinster), which had all come to terms with the Normans, were allowed access to royal law courts as a privilege. It was also possible by the second half of the thirteenth century for individual Irishmen living within Norman areas to buy grants of privilege, though this class of person never seems to have numbered more than a few dozen. An attempt was made c. 1277–80 by the archbishop of Cashel to negotiate the purchase of a grant of English law on a wider scale. Though this did not come to anything, it presumably reflected a recognition by churchmen of Irish background that the existing situation carried with it serious disadvantages for the Church as an institution. Archbishop MacCarvell and others like him were, after all, 'reformers' with no great commitment to the traditional Irish kinship system as it extended to ecclesiastical matters.

In general, however, the effect of the introduction of Norman-style law with its relegation of many Irishmen to second-class status may well have been to increase the attractiveness of reliance upon kindred. To whom could an Irishman turn? The Calendar of Justiciary Rolls tells of a group of Irish tenants who after their English lord was slain approached another Englishman and asked to be placed under his protection. He agreed to do this, indicated some waste lands where they might settle and then arranged for them to be massacred en route. Presumably not all such requests for 'avowry' ended in this way, but it may well be that kinship ties seemed a more reliable method of achieving security. If this was so, the introduction of Norman feudalism into Ireland may have had the paradoxical result of helping to keep alive non-feudal ties. There is no doubt, indeed, that the Normans themselves came to recognise the power of kinship links among the Irish – so much so that a technical term

from Brehon law, *cin confocuis*, appears in early parliamentary legislation in Ireland during Edward I's reign.

In some parts of Ireland, notably in the south-west, the Normans blended into an existing pattern of alliances. Maurice FitzThomas, who first established the power of the FitzGeralds in south Munster, drew upon the support of the O Briens as well as some of his fellow Normans. However, perhaps the key difference between the two societies lay in the continuing colonial settlement of the east. Without this factor it is difficult to explain why the MacMurroughs should have become disenchanted with their former allies, the Normans. The MacMurroughs initially benefited from the invasion. It was their hereditary enemies, the O Brenans, who had been driven out of Wexford to take refuge in the uplands of the Nore valley. From about 1270, however, the MacMurroughs showed signs of hostility to the colonists, so much so that Roger Bigod, earl of Norfolk, who had been granted the lordship of Carlow, planned to bring them over to England to meet Edward I, in the hope of negotiating a truce. Bigod himself, however, may have been the cause of the problem, in so far as he encouraged colonisation of his Irish estates. At all events, the threat from the MacMurroughs had become so great that in 1282 the justiciar, Stephen of Fulbourn, bishop of Waterford, took steps to have them assassinated. In folk-memory this murder became an event by which the passing of time was judged.

That Mary was of the age of twenty-three years on the vigil of St Mary Magdalen last. He knows this by common fame current in this country which was that Mary was born to Philip, of his wife then being in Fyngal, on the day when Art McMurth was slain who was slain on the said vigil. And it is known in the whole country that twenty-three years are passed since Art McMurth was slain.

If the Viking invasions brought about the fall of many aspects of the 'Old Order', the Norman Conquests completed the process. During the Viking centuries the British Isles remained divided into distinct but overlapping political and cultural communities, all of them affected to a greater or lesser extent by Scandinavian influences, Norwegian or Danish. With the coming of the Normans, communities of the British Isles were brought together at the aristocratic level, in Church and State, within a single cultural and political ascendancy which looked towards France. For nearly three centuries a French-speaking colonial elite imposed its own cultural norms, with the castle, the borough, the reformed Church and new-style episcopal government as their mainstays. This was very much a 'command' society in which power rested with a military aristocracy. Institutions associated with different forms of society, those based
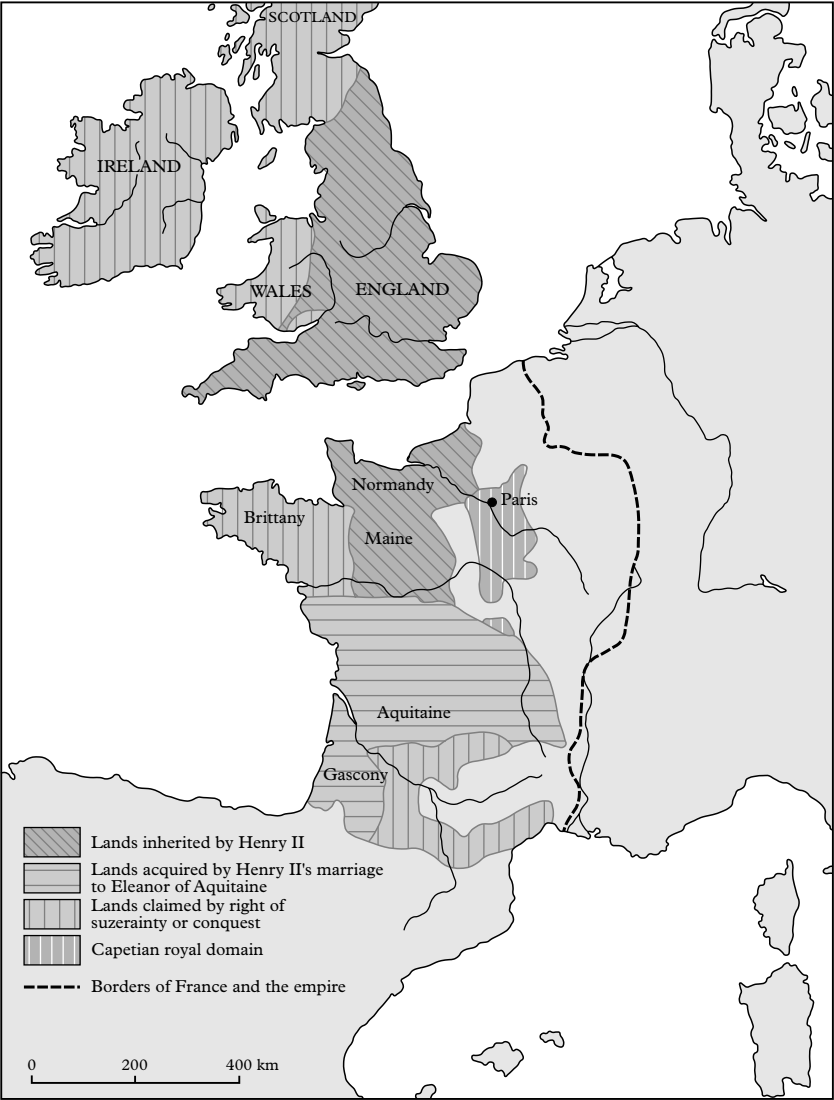
Map 14. The Angevin empire/the post-Norman empire.

on kinship or on the market, took a second place during this period. The Normans were not interested in trade for its own sake. The dominant ideology of the regime was based upon the notion of the three estates, warriors, priests and peasants, each with its own function. Merchants had no obvious place in this scheme of things. In this society the highest

prestige was reserved for the military class with its tournaments and its cult of chivalry. The highest loyalty was reserved for lord or king, not for the kinship group. In religion the same assumptions may be seen at work. The cathedrals of the colonial regime stressed the importance of authority, divine and episcopal. Some historians have detected a shift, from a concern with offences against one's neighbour or kindred to a preoccupation with sin against divine authority, as having taken place during the Counter-Reformation. Something of the same kind, though possibly on a more limited scale, seems to have occurred during this period also.

The use of the term 'Norman' for the whole of this period, from the mid-eleventh to the mid-fourteenth centuries, is, of course, very much an oversimplification. The followers of William the Conqueror were not exclusively Norman. Many were Breton, Flemish and Picard by background. From the mid-twelfth century the line of Norman kings was replaced by that of Henry II Plantagenet and the Angevins. The early settlers of Wales, Scotland and Ireland included many Flemings. But such qualifications, while necessary, do not change the essential fact that a French-orientated ascendancy introduced by the Normans came to dominate most of the British Isles, so much so that the historian loses sight of the varied cultures over which the 'Normans' ruled. It is only by a conscious effort that the historian reminds himself that the newcomers were very much in a minority. The history of the various cultures of the British Isles during this period still remains to be written, for the localities of England as well as for north and south Wales, Highland and Lowland Scotland and Ireland, east and west of the Shannon. These cultures survived, but few if any of them escaped the influence of the Norman ascendancy.

Postscript

Students of 'British Isles History' now have to hand a master work, *The First English Empire: Power and Identities in the British Isles 1093–1343* (Oxford, 2000) by Professor Rees Davies (now Sir Rees Davies). Professor Robin Frame has also made a notable contribution in his *The Political Development of the British Isles* (Oxford, 1990) and *Ireland and Britain* (London, 1998). To these may now be added a number of brilliant articles by Professor John Gillingham. In one of these he refers to 'the English empire established in the tenth century – a thousand year *Reich* in the making' (in A. Grant and Keith J. Stringer, eds., 1995). The key difference of emphasis between these approaches and that are put forward here in Chapter 5 is their stress upon 'the English'. Where then are the Normans in this new 'English' interpretation? The question

as to when the Normans began to see themselves as 'English' has long been debated, as has the question whether the Norman Conquest was really a conquest or rather a relatively peaceful 'takeover'. Scholars such as James Campbell and John Gillingham make a formidable case for their view that the conquerors came to see themselves as 'English' by the mid-twelfth century. However, the concept of 'Norman' cannot be taken too literally. William the Conqueror's invading force in 1066 included many who came from outside Normandy. In addition, with the succession of the Angevin Henry II to the throne of England, my use of the term 'Norman' is open to criticism. How then are we to describe the invaders of Ireland in 1169? Surely not as Angevins? The concept 'Norman' or 'Norman-French', like the concept 'Norman Conquest', has not yet outlived its usefulness. This said, there is little doubt that Rees Davies' book *The First English Empire* (2000) constitutes a landmark in the historiography of these islands. Davies, a Welsh-speaking scholar who possesses first-hand knowledge of Welsh history, is also a former student of K.B. McFarlane and equally at home in English history. He has also made it his business to familiarise himself with Scottish and Irish history. Future historians of the British Isles have no finer model.

The implications of his view of English history are far-reaching. In effect they spell out a view which emphasises 'internal colonialism' as a prime motif. Edward I now appears as the 'Hammer of the Scots' rather than the 'English Justinian'. Magna Carta, Davies tells us, was, and came to be regarded as, an affirmation of the political identity of an essentially English body politic. Stubbs' emphasis on it did 'good service for England', he tells us, but left unanswered its role for the rest of the British Isles and England's relationship to it. *The First English Empire* is indeed a challenge to that classic statement of the Whig interpretation of history, Stubbs' *Constitutional History of England* (1880).

One of the most valuable and original features of the book is Davies' discussion of the importance of historical mythology. He shows in particular how Geoffrey of Monmouth's tales of Arthur influenced the thinking of Edward I. He refers to an 'all encompassing self-identity kit of Englishness' which was 'the tool box of English identity and had centuries of service ahead of it' (p. 2). Davies' eloquence carries us with him, but we cannot avoid the question as to how far down the social scale this sense of national identity reached. Did it encompass all the villeins and serfs mentioned in Domesday Book, for example?

There has been a great increase in Scottish history in recent years, comparable to that in Irish and Welsh history. Attention may be drawn in particular to William Ferguson's wide-ranging study *The Identity of*

the Scottish Nation (1998) together with Edward J. Cowan, *For Freedom Alone: The Declaration of Arbroath* (2003).

Amid this rise in interest in the so-called 'Celtic Fringe' it is easy to lose sight of the fact that England in wealth, resources and power gained in dominance during these centuries. It is thus important to draw attention to such works as *Magna Carta* by Professor James Holt (revised edition, 1992) with its detailed analysis of what became a key symbol for the 'whig interpretation of history'.

6 The decline of the post-Norman empire

The end of the thirteenth century saw the greatest extent of the post-Norman Edwardian empire of the British Isles. In Wales, Edward I's castles symbolised the establishment of royal authority over the last autonomous Welsh kingdom. Wales was now divided between marcher lordships in the south and west and a principality in the north-west where royal castles dominated the coastline from Harlech northwards. In Ireland, the royal justiciar John Wogan, sitting at Ardfert in Kerry, heard a plea concerning land at Dunquin. Royal power was not confined to Dublin and the east coast but extended to remote areas in the south-west. In Scotland, Edward, acting as overlord, had appointed guardians to decide upon the succession to the Scottish Crown. In England, the king seemed well able to cope with any opposition. The main problems seemed likely to arise in Gascony which Edward held as the vassal of the king of France.

As we now know, none of this proved to be permanent. Wogan's court in 1307 was the last royal assize to be held in Kerry for three centuries. In Scotland, Robert Bruce, whose father had fought with Henry III at the battle of Lewes, defeated the forces of Edward II at Bannockburn (1314). The conquest of Wales seemed to have succeeded but even here, at the end of the fourteenth century, Owain Glyndwr exposed the shallow foundations of Edward I's success.

With the benefit of hindsight we may decide that the break-up of the Edwardian empire into four 'national' units was inevitable. But this may be to take too narrow a view. In the context of the British Isles, the superiority of the south-east in men and resources was clear. The building of Edward's Welsh castles was a remarkable technical achievement, which depended for its success upon the mobilisation of skilled labour from all over England. The royal administrative system made it possible to levy taxes on a national scale. Given the political will, the assertion of royal authority throughout the British Isles seemed to be an eminently practicable proposition. Twenty years after the defeat at Bannockburn, Edward III gave his support to Edward Balliol's attempt to gain the Scottish

throne. Robert Bruce had died in 1329, succeeded by his son David, who was only five years old. There was thus a golden opportunity to avenge Bannockburn and to reverse the terms of the Treaty of Northampton, by which the independence of Scotland had been recognised. In 1333, Balliol gained a decisive victory at Halidon Hill, and in 1334 ceded much of the area south of the Forth to Edward III. Edinburgh was occupied by Edward and remained in his possession until 1340.

What made the conquest of 'Scotland' difficult was the support which the young David Bruce began to receive from the French. In effect, France presented Edward with the option of choosing between Gascony and Scotland. Edward's reply, in 1337, was to claim the Crown of France, a claim which he might well have put forward in 1328 after the death of Charles IV, last of the Capetian kings of France. From 1337 onwards, Edward was committed to a gigantic gamble on the European continent. It was to this that royal resources were to be devoted. Scotland for the time being became an object of secondary importance.

The French wars, as we now know, proved to be a long-term commitment. For over a hundred years, the French enterprise required the expenditure of resources and manpower on the grandest scale. Historians differ about the profitability of the wars, much as they do about whether the British empire of a later date showed a profit or loss at the end of the day. What concerns us here are the political consequences of the wars in the context of the British Isles. There can be little doubt that the prime importance which was given to the dream of an empire in France distracted attention away from what now seemed to be the lesser vision of an empire in the British Isles.

As a consequence, at least in part, of Edward III's involvement in France, the Norman ascendancy dissolved into several constituent parts. The sense of difference was most marked in the Scottish Lowlands where the struggle for independence was prolonged. In Ireland, it arose as the result of the Norman lords being left to enjoy a *de facto* independence over a long period. In Wales, the marcher lords were allowed to retain their privileges as the price of defending the Welsh march. In northern England, a new class of marcher lordships came into existence to defend the border with Scotland. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a pattern may be seen emerging in the British Isles which was nearer to that of the Iberian peninsula than to France, in the sense that local autonomies prevailed over a wider monarchy.

The future of the Norman ascendancy was also influenced by factors over which Edward III had little control. In 1349, the Black Death reduced the population of England by one third. The result of this and succeeding attacks of plague was to reduce the population pressures which

had provided much of the impetus to colonisation. The pressure on land which had drawn many English tenants to seek their fortunes in Wales and in Ireland was reversed. For the remainder of the century and for most of the fifteenth it would be a question of landlords seeking tenants for their land, not vice versa. The Norman colonies in Ireland and Wales now lacked the constant supply of manpower upon which they relied. The demographic links which held the ascendancy together began to dissolve during the fourteenth century.

It was not until the sixteenth century that this period in insular history came to an end. By then the demographic situation had changed. In addition, the Tudors, for their own reasons, were prepared to give much of their attention to the affairs of Scotland, Ireland and Wales. After the Scottish defeat at Flodden in 1513, the Lowlands were left exposed to English pressure and in 1560 Elizabeth was able to intervene on the side of the pro-English party. The victory of John Knox and the Scottish reformers was in effect a victory for English influence. In Ireland, successive monarchs had intervened from time to time though without effective results. Edward III sent William of Windsor over to Ireland in the mid-fourteenth century. Richard II made two largely symbolic visits to Ireland. Edward IV sent over John Tiptoft as lord deputy, with disastrous consequences for the earl of Desmond (who was executed) but without long-term political results. It was not until Thomas Cromwell took action against the young earl of Kildare in 1535 that royal power became a reality. In Wales, the Acts of Union, passed under Cromwell, in 1536 and 1543 brought the marcher lordships to an end. In England itself the defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536 led to the establishment of a royal Council of the North, which in effect took over from the marcher lords. In 1314 all this was far in the future. For two centuries the history of the British Isles was the history of its individual communities.

The political history of England during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is a tale of violence and revolution made familiar in the work of Shakespeare and Marlowe. In 1327 Roger Mortimer and Queen Isabella deposed Edward II, only for Mortimer to be killed in his turn by the young Edward III in the counter-revolution of 1330. In 1399 Richard II was deposed by Henry of Lancaster, who claimed the throne as Henry IV. In 1461, Henry VI was deposed, restored in 1470, and deposed once more in 1471. In 1485 Richard III died on Bosworth Field in battle against Henry Tudor, the future Henry VII. To this story of violence must be added the violence involved in the Hundred Years War, with its innumerable sackings, sieges and destructive 'scorched earth' marches. The battles of Crécy, Poitiers and Agincourt and the burning of Jeanne D'Arc were incidents in a prolonged war, at the end of which there was civil war in England itself.

Figure 20. *St George's Chapel, Windsor*
St George's Chapel, Windsor was rebuilt during the reign of the Yorkist King Edward IV. It replaced an earlier chapel which had once been dedicated to St Edward. St George, himself a shadowy figure from fourth-century Greece, was believed to have visited England and a leg purporting to be his was venerated at Canterbury. Why the myth of St George should take hold in England is still a matter for speculation.

From the standpoint of political history, it is difficult to avoid a pessimistic conclusion. Looked at in the context of economic history, however, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries take on a somewhat different colouring. As a consequence of the sudden decline in population caused by the Black Death of 1348 the second half of the fourteenth century in England witnessed the decline of unfree tenures, accompanied by a shift from labour services to cash rents. A shortage of labour led to the rise of labourers' wages. During the same period, cloth made in southern England began to be exported in large quantities. Industrialisation took place in East Anglia, the Cotswolds and, in due course, in the West Riding of Yorkshire. England, which had been a colonial-style economy exporting raw materials, turned to manufactures.

The sharp contrast which exists between the political and economic history of the period suggests that we may be justified in thinking that we are dealing with two societies, one of them a military society, in which a military class controlled the use of resources, and the other a market society, in which profit by peaceful exchange was the main objective. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the castle dominated the working of the English economy. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the balance shifted in favour of the merchant community. The continuance of the Hundred Years War, however, ensured that military considerations were often paramount. Thus the Crown, using its right of purveyance, was empowered to buy food for its armies or garrisons at prices which were set by its own representatives. The war necessarily diverted resources from the economy at large for the purposes of achieving political objectives.

The existence of a military society during these centuries was clearest on the border with Scotland. The Scottish wars, which were inextricably intertwined with the wider conflict of the Hundred Years War itself as a consequence of the Franco-Scottish alliance, led to the creation of a military class to defend the north of England. Hence the northern counties of Northumberland, Westmorland and Cumberland became more 'feudalised' than had been the case earlier. The building took place of castles of a type which was no longer needed in the more peaceful south. Such castles were built at Etel (1341), Edlingham (1350), Gleeston (1330) and elsewhere. Smaller 'peel' castles were also erected for the defence of smaller estates. A type of marcher society came into existence in northern England of a kind which had long been familiar on the Welsh borders and in Ireland. The Percys, the Nevilles and the Cliffords came to play a role in English politics which the Mortimers of Wigmore and Chirk had played earlier.

The castle was a familiar feature of military society. The war also brought into existence a new institution in the 'affinity' of indentured

retainers. John of Gaunt, one of the sons of Edward III, indentured well over a hundred esquires at a peacetime salary of up to 20 marks a year, provided that they also recruited a man-at-arms. While it may be going too far to regard the Hundred Years War as a gigantic system of outdoor relief for the English feudal elite, there is no doubt that service with the military nobility during the war provided an attractive and appropriate career for many hard-pressed younger sons of minor landlords. The war in France was a long-term imperial venture, which was the counterpart in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries of the empire in the British Isles which had drawn the Normans in 1066.

War to such men as Sir John Chandos and Sir John Fastolf was a money-making enterprise. The Hundred Years War, however, was not exclusively justified in financial terms by its participants. In an earlier period, the idea of the Crusade had provided the reason for undertaking military expeditions in eastern Europe, the Holy Land and even in parts of western Europe. The ideological backing for the Hundred Years War was supplied by the cult of chivalry. Edward III consciously cultivated the notion that the war was a romantic enterprise. The torchlight-procession of knights at Bristol in 1358 was not an isolated event but part of a programme of tournaments and other activities intended to convey the chivalric message. In 1348 Edward III founded the Order of the Garter as a community of knights modelled upon the fellowship of King Arthur and the Round Table. The knight was encouraged to see himself as following a higher calling, marked off by the code of chivalry from those who made fortunes by the base method of trade. Presumably those who suffered at the hands of Edward's captains did not share these assumptions.

This romantic approach to war (or pseudo-romantic depending upon one's point of view) was incorporated in the architecture of the castles which were built in southern England. The new-style castles of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries provided a military façade for what were in fact palatial living quarters. The most spectacular example of such conspicuous consumption was the castle which Edward built at his birthplace, Windsor, between 1350 and 1377. The cost of the whole enterprise was, by contemporary standards, prodigious. John of Gaunt built a similarly elaborate castle at Kenilworth. Sir John Fastolf, a lesser figure, built in the same vein but on a smaller scale at Caistor, near Norwich. Other examples of the 'chivalric castle' include castles at Raglan, Crew and Tattersall. All were monuments to a particular ideology.

The attractions of a military career may well have seemed greatest to lords and their families who were hard hit by the crisis in agriculture. During the two centuries which followed the Conquest the feudal elite controlled resources through the related institutions of castle, borough and Church. In the fourteenth century, this situation changed radically.

As a result of the sudden decline in population which followed the Black Death, the manorial officials were no longer able to control their tenants in the same way. Since land was freely available, it was relatively easy for unfree tenants to move. As labour was now scarce, wages went up on estates which made use of wage-labour. More and more landlords decided to abandon demesne farming, and to cease employing the unfree labour on which the system depended and to rent their land out to tenants. Villeinage declined and the status of peasants rose. There also seems to have been a shift of wealth from the countryside to the towns during this period.

A comparison of the taxation returns of 1334 and 1515 indicates that the balance of wealth shifted from the grain counties of the midlands to the new clothing-industry areas of the south. In 1300 English wool provided the raw material for the cloth industries of Flanders and northern Italy. By 1400, a 'native' cloth industry had come into being, partly as a result of the migration of Flemish weavers to a country in which wool was relatively cheap and water power was abundant. The heavy export taxes on wool exported abroad made the possibility of manufacturing cloth a more practicable proposition than it had been when export duties were light. By 1381 Flemish weavers were conspicuous enough to be the targets of native hostility.

One of the consequences of the rise of the cloth industry was the development of towns and industrial villages in those areas where the industry prospered. In these counties a shift took place from the manor-dominated borough to the independent town. Coventry achieved its independence during the mid-fourteenth century. Other towns followed suit in obtaining their own mayor and council. Ecclesiastical boroughs, which were slow to make the transition, became centres of unrest during the so-called Peasants' Revolt of 1381. What was coming into being was a market-orientated society in the south of England, above all in London.

Military society had its own institutions, as too had the market society, all of them associated with towns. The equivalent of the military affinities were the urban guilds, which were in essence monopolies designed to protect the general interests of their members. The profit motive was understandably uppermost but the guilds also stressed the importance of fraternity. The fraternities, each with their own church, were the equivalent in market society of the indentured retinues of military society. Rituals, patrons, saints, liveries, mystery-plays, all served as symbols of unity within the appropriate fraternity. Conspicuous consumption in this society took the form of church-building or of the establishment of chantries to say masses for the souls of guild members. In the early fifteenth

century some London guilds were able to buy town-houses from the nobility and convert them to their own purposes. These economic changes were also responsible for a cultural change of great significance – the emergence of the English language as a socially acceptable medium. English was the language of the trading community and the rise of London, Norwich, Bristol and other towns brought about the elevated social status of English.

The constitutional link between the military and market sectors of English society was provided in parliament. The balance between the two was far from equal, however. For all the wealth of the market society, the exercise of political power was heavily weighted in favour of the landed aristocracy. It might have been better for the towns had a system of estates developed different from that of the English parliament. As it was, the landed interest dominated the House of Lords in the persons of the great magnates and the House of Commons in the representatives of the knights of the shires. It is not surprising that parliaments should have consistently thrown their weight on the side of 'military society'. From the mid-fourteenth century onwards parliament passed a series of sumptuary laws, designed to prevent the 'lower' classes wearing clothes which were more appropriate to the gentry. It was parliament which in 1351 passed the Statute of Labourers in a vain attempt to control wages in the interests of rural landlords. It was parliament which attempted to forbid towns from harbouring villeins who had fled from their masters. In 1413 the Statute of Additions was passed requiring persons involved in lawsuits to give more precise descriptions of themselves, another measure aimed at restricting social mobility. In 1429, in an attempt to restrict the number of voters in county elections, the vote was confined to forty-shilling freeholders.

The most dramatic example of the control of parliament by military society was the 'Merciless' parliament of 1388, when the five magnates, Gloucester, Arundel, Warwick, Bolingbroke (the son of John of Gaunt) and Nottingham brought about the downfall of Richard II's government. One of the royal counsellors was Nicholas Brembre, mayor of London, who supported the anti-war policies of the Crown. The king was forced to give way and Brembre, along with some others, was executed. A similar crisis occurred a decade later, when Richard II was forced to abdicate by Henry of Lancaster. Richard was committed to a policy of peace with France and had he remained in power the likelihood is that the Hundred Years War would not have been resumed. The political power of the magnates ensured that England was again involved in a long imperial venture under Henry V and his successor which may be said not to have ended until the loss of Calais in 1558.

The political influence of military society was also to be seen in the interventions which the Percys, marcher lords of the north, played in the revolution which brought down Richard II and in events in 1403 which might easily have caused the fall of his successor Henry IV. During the Wars of the Roses a similar role was played by the Nevilles.

There was little sign of the political rise of a middle class during this period. The politically ambitious merchants had to acquire some semblance of gentility in the form of a landed estate before they could hope for a political career. Social differences died hard, however, as John Wiltshire found to his cost when he purchased half a manor and became tenant in chief to the king, with the service of handing the king a towel before dinner on coronation day. The court set up by John of Gaunt to adjudicate on his claim ordered that it be delegated to the earl of Cambridge. Despite such individual problems, however, it has been estimated that marriages between children of gentry and of merchants were common (amounting to between a quarter and a third of surviving cases).

In the context of insular history the partial industrialisation of the southern counties was a significant event, or series of events, which led to the differentiation of this area of England from the rest of the British Isles. The southern counties came to resemble other industrialised areas of western Europe, especially Flanders and northern Italy. In terms of population and wealth they mark a great change. The economic pull of the market society of the south began to influence Wales and Ireland even during a period when the political links between the various communities were in a state of suspension.

At the end of the thirteenth century, the power of Edward I in Wales was at its height. His victories over Llywelyn had led to the creation of the principality which stretched from Gwynedd in the north, down the Welsh coast to Carmarthen in the south. But this was not the only indication of royal influence. During the 1290s, Edward made a point of demonstrating his control over the marcher lords. He sat in judgement on the earls of Gloucester and Hereford, lords of Glamorgan and Brecon respectively. He imprisoned the lord of Ewyas Lacy. He ordered Edmund Mortimer of Wigmore, who had hanged a villein belonging to the royal lordship of Montgomery, to provide an effigy of the felon which could be hung on the royal gallows. In these and other episodes Edward showed his intention to maintain his rights in the marches, though he was careful not to take more than what he considered his due.

In both the principality and the marches, the foundation of 'Norman' power still rested upon the combination of castle, borough, priory and manor. Castles continued to dominate the countryside. The burgesses of boroughs established close to the castles often served as warriors in

the retinue of their lord. In time of political confrontation, the marcher lords were able to parade the military strength which they had at their disposal. In 1313, the Bohun earl of Hereford could rely upon his 'crowd of Welshmen wild from the woodland'. In 1321, the followers of Mortimer of Wigmore paraded 'all clothed in green with their arms yellow'. In the revolution of 1399, Henry of Bolingbroke was met by loyal tenants from his Welsh estates. The marcher lordships exemplified the power of military society.

As was the case in fourteenth-century England, however, the foundations of this society were soon to be eroded by the demographic catastrophe of the Black Death and its aftermath. From mid-century, villages began to be abandoned. The area of cultivated land contracted. Lords found themselves unable to enforce the labour services due to them within the manorial framework. In 1397, the lord of Dyffryn Clwyd complained that his *natiui* refused to perform their harvest obligations and mill dues. Bondmen fled from their estates, in 'Welshries' as well as 'Englishries'. Many colonial boroughs were penetrated by Welshmen whose presence within their walls had hitherto been forbidden. The Englishry of Glamorgan was recolonised by Welshmen. Reaction against seigniorial attempts to restore the status quo was almost certainly one of the causes behind the revolt of Owain Glyndwr in 1400. By the early fifteenth century, the military society was everywhere in retreat, despite the enactment of penal laws which made Welshmen 'second-class citizens' in their own country.

Socially, if not legally, the Welsh 'natives' were the beneficiaries at the expense of the colonists. The situation was by no means a simple one, however. In the 'Welshries', the social structure which had survived Norman invasion broke down in the face of population decline. The kinship-based system of inheritance increasingly gave way to one in which holdings passed from father to son. In the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, Welshmen in large numbers adopted English tenure, with its freer possibilities of alienation, and its allowance for descent to women, in preference to the Welsh system with its defence of the rights of the members of the kinship group. By the end of the fifteenth century, Welsh rural society was heavily 'anglicised' in an economic sense.

The marcher lordships also found it difficult to cope with the new freedom of market conditions. Ideally, each marcher lordship had constituted a single economic unity whose resources were mobilised for the good of the whole (as seen from the lord's point of view). Thus the Mortimer estate in Wales provided supplies for the Mortimer estate in Ireland. The controlled market upon which this rested gave way to a more open system. Market towns, such as Wrexham, replaced the restricted estate boroughs. Fairs became increasingly popular for the freedom of sale which they

offered. In south Wales, numerous small ports traded with Bristol and Devon. The wool of the Welsh uplands became an important source of raw material for the growing English cloth industry. Welsh cattle supplied meat for the markets of south-eastern England. South and east Wales, in particular, were drawn into a close relationship with the English economy. The particularism which had been so marked a feature of the economic life of the marcher lordships gave way to a more open system.

The result by the early sixteenth century was considerable social change. The military society, dominated by the castle and its associated institutions, gave way to one in which the squire's manor house, the market town and the individual farmer were typical. The egalitarianism of the kinship group (*gwely*) gave way increasingly to a society stratified by wealth. The bondmen, whose task from early days had been to supply the courts of the Welsh princes with food, disappeared from Welsh life, perhaps to become labourers. In the 'Englishries', the manorial structure gave way to farms and villages.

All these changes preceded the formal incorporation of Wales into the English political, legal and administrative system in the Acts of Union 1536 and 1543 which in effect ratified the social revolution of the preceding century. Differences between English and Welsh codes of law were now abolished. Marcher lordships were incorporated within English-style shires. The Welsh language survived these changes but the culture which came into existence in most parts of Wales was something new, an amalgam of Norman, English and Welsh. The new Welsh squirearchy in many ways resembled its English counterpart. Soon *gwely* and *galanas* were to be forgotten and castles to fall into ruins. Broad differences of outlook between north and south Wales continued to exist, however.

In Scotland, Bruce's victory in 1314 at Bannockburn and the Treaty of Northampton some fourteen years later, recognising Scottish independence, did not bring peace. The border between England and Scotland became in effect a subsidiary theatre in the Hundred Years War. The French alliance, which was the guarantee of independence, by its very nature required the Scots to engage in military operations on the border. Hence what might have been a peaceful frontier turned into an area of continual war. The high points of this were the battles of Neville's Cross in 1346, Homildon Hill in 1402, Flodden in 1513 and Pinkie in 1547. But these were merely the major events in a series of conflicts which went on for over two hundred years.

We have already glanced at the effects which this state of affairs had upon the northern counties of England. The effect was equally far-reaching upon the Scottish Lowlands, and indirectly upon the Highlands as well. The frontier war brought into existence a society which was even

Figure 21. *The battle of Bannockburn*
The battle of Bannockburn (1314) is a key event in the establishment
of the independence of a Scottish nation. The Declaration of Arbroath,
an appeal to Pope John XXII, made the case some years later (1322) on
the grounds of principle. In due course the King of Scots established
control of the north and west but the threat from England remained
constant, a fact which explains an enduring Franco-Scottish alliance.

more organised for war than that which had existed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In this situation the Scottish Crown was heavily dependent upon a nobility able to put large numbers of retainers into the field at short notice. The most powerful of these was the house of Douglas, rulers of Galloway (the Black Douglases) and, through another branch of the family, of the east coast (the Red Douglases of Angus). The Douglases also had allies in the north upon whose support they could count.

The power of William, eighth earl of Douglas (1425?–52) was seen most dramatically in his treatment of a certain MacLellan, who refused to serve as a Douglas retainer. MacLellan was imprisoned. A kinsman who came to ask for his deliverance was told, after being served dinner, that '[he had] come a litill to leit; bot zondar is zour sistir sone lyand; bot he wantis the heid; take his bodie and do with it quhat ze will'. This incident well illustrates how the Black Douglas regarded himself as to all intents and purposes an independent ruler with the power of life and death. It also helps to explain how the king with the aid of the enemies made by the Black Douglas was able to bring about the downfall of the family in 1455.

In this military society the castle was the centre of lordship. The Douglas castle at Threave in Galloway, built in the late fourteenth century, had its counterparts in other lordships throughout Scotland. Not until the coming of artillery in the mid-fifteenth century did the balance shift against the castle. With its base in local society the nobility controlled access to higher appointments in the Church and the major abbeys. Even more than in England parliament was dominated by the earls and nobles. In any one parliament it was usual for only a few boroughs (not always the same) to be represented. Boroughs, indeed, despite their theoretical independence were very much exposed to pressures from the local nobility. The baronial courts were the legal reality in the face of the continued weakness of the royal courts. Sheriffs, in theory royal servants, commonly belonged to the dominant nobility of the region. War, far from uniting society, was a major factor in creating disunity.

One consequence of the overwhelming importance of the defence of the southern borders was the decline of Lowland influence in the west. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, while the attention of the Lowlanders was diverted southwards, the west was able to enjoy a prolonged period of independence. During this period the MacDonalds, Lords of the Isles, were able to extend their influence into Ulster, where a branch of the family became the MacDonnells of Antrim. The military innovation on which this rise in their power rested was the gallowglasses (*galloglaich* = foreign soldiers), highly disciplined companies of swordsmen

and axemen who dominated the tactical scene in this area until the sixteenth century. Gallowglasses from the Isles became the indentured retainers of the O Donnells and of the earl of Desmond. The importance of the Lords of the Isles in a British Isles context was illustrated in 1388 when Richard II sent a mission to establish good relations with them. For their part, the Scottish kings were always willing to accept overtures from disgruntled Ulster chiefs.

Royal influence had not entirely ceased to exist in the west, but here as elsewhere the Crown was dependent upon a military nobility which had its own interests in mind as much as those of the Crown. In Argyll, the Campbells had been brought in by Bruce as a replacement for the MacDougalls, the allies of his rivals, the Comyns. In due course the Campbells, who became earls of Argyll in 1458, were to be uncrowned kings of the west. Further north, the Huntleys and the MacKenzies served as the channels of Lowland influence.

It is possibly a mistake to overstress the difference between the 'two cultures' of Highlands and Lowlands at this date. Such Lowland magnates as the Black Douglases, with their indentured retainers and their power to enforce acceptance of service ('bond of manrent') over a wide area, in many ways resembled Highland chiefs. The inner core of their followers, enjoying the same name as their leader, were bound by ties of kinship as close as any Highland clan. In the absence of a central authority the 'feud' may indeed have been the main sanction behind local law. The clan, for its part, was by this date very much a feudal institution in which military service was rendered to the chief in return for his protection. The *galloglaich*, who served in Ireland, were the Gaelic equivalent of indentured retainers. Feudalism in its late medieval form was no stranger to the Highlands. Many of the customs of the Highlands seemed strange to Lowland eyes, but the political behaviour of the chiefs conformed to the assumptions of the time. John MacDonald of the Isles when he became the ally of the Douglases saw nothing strange in making a treaty with Edward IV of England. The survival of lordship rested upon a shrewd appraisal of the realities of the balance of power. In the long run, however, this was to tilt against the MacDonalds.

The Lowlands proper consisted of a relatively narrow belt stretching east–west between Glasgow and Edinburgh and a coastal strip running north–south from Coldingham to Brechin, and taking in the river valleys of the Forth and the Tay. It was the culture of this area which contrasted most sharply with that of the Highlands. Here English was now dominant even among the nobility. The earl of March, writing to Henry IV, his patron, in 1400, spoke of his preference for English rather than French. The majority of burghs, churches and monasteries were concentrated in

Figure 22. *The seals of Owain Glyndwr*
Owain Glyndwr (c.1350-c.1416) appears as a somewhat eccentric per-
sonage in Shakespeare's play *Henry IV*. A recent biography by Sir Rees
Davies has established him as a significant figure in his own right who
proclaimed himself Prince of Wales and whose alliance with Henry Percy
(Hotspur) might well have changed the pattern of English and Welsh
history.

the Lowlands. There is little doubt that the level of literacy was higher than in the rest of Scotland. Above all, market relations based on cash were becoming more common in the south-east than in the feudalised west where services in kind remained usual for a long time to come. The shift to a cash economy was to be seen in the commutation of labour service into money rents, a process which occurred during the fifteenth century on the ecclesiastical estates which covered much of the region. The practice of *feuing* (leasing out land for a fixed annual sum), which guaranteed inheritance in perpetuity provided the sum was duly paid, was a feature of the Lowlands. It was unknown in the Highlands where security of tenure was still associated with membership of a kinship group under the chief's protection.

Signs that the autonomy of the Isles might be in danger have been read into the fall of the house of Douglas in the 1450s. It was not until 1476, however, that James III (1460–88) turned his attention to the west. In 1476, John MacDonald, earl of Ross and Lord of the Isles, surrendered his earldom to the Crown after being accused of treasonable relations with Edward IV in the preceding decade. He was soon to be overthrown by his illegitimate son Angus Og ('The Young'), who in turn was to be assassinated (1490). In 1494 a royal naval base was created at Tarbet on the Clyde, once a castle of Bruce. Early in the sixteenth century several castles in the Isles were bombarded from the sea. Royal artillery, which had proved so effective against Douglas, had been mounted on ships and used against the MacDonalds.

As in Wales and Scotland, the high-water mark of imperial power was reached in Ireland c. 1300. In 1245 the old kingdom of Leinster had been divided into five feudal lordships, Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Leix and Wexford. The magnates who held these fiefs – Bigod, de Vesci, de Clare, Mortimer and de Valence – were all members of the ruling elite and their 'presence' in Ireland indicated the strength of the imperial connection. Assizes were held regularly at Dublin, Cork and Limerick in the second half of the thirteenth century. As mentioned earlier, the peak of imperial power may be seen in 1307 when the king's justiciar John Wogan tried a case at Ardfert (Co. Kerry) concerning land in Dunquin, at the tip of the Dingle peninsula. The imperial connection could go no further in the south-west of Ireland. It was a brief moment, however, and three more centuries were to elapse before it reoccurred.

The immediate causes which led to the decline of imperial influence in Scotland also affected Ireland. In 1315 Edward Bruce, brother of Robert Bruce, was invited to campaign in Ulster by an alliance of Ulster chiefs and discontented Norman barons. For a time there was a real possibility that Ireland might follow the example of Scotland and become an

independent kingdom with Edward Bruce as its ruler. Bruce's defeat at Faughart in 1318 ruled this out but the result of the Bruce episode in the long term was to expose the dependence of the Crown upon the feudal magnates. By the end of the fourteenth century, direct imperial rule in Ireland had been replaced by indirect influence exercised throughout the south of Ireland by three great feudal magnates, Desmond, Ormond and Kildare. Though they held their land in theory from the Crown as earls, the FitzGeralds of Desmond and of Kildare and the Butlers of Ormond in effect ruled their territories as independent units. The FitzGeralds and the Butlers were the equivalent in Ireland of the great marcher houses of the Welsh and Scottish borders tolerated by the Crown for fear of a greater evil.

Future patterns of power in the south were already evident in the first half of the fourteenth century in the tumultuous career of Maurice FitzThomas, who was created first earl of Desmond in 1319. The house of Desmond, once established, became the leading political force in Munster and together with the FitzGerald earls of Kildare and the Butlers of Tipperary and Kilkenny formed an Anglo-Norman bloc, which, despite internal dissensions and repeated clashes with the royal administration, remained part of the English nexus. The earl of Desmond, for example, served as a loyal tenant-in-chief with Edward III against the Scots. Feudal structures and assumptions survived in the south in spite of the fact that direct Crown control was ultimately confined to the 'Pale' around Dublin and Waterford.

Maurice FitzThomas was a descendant of the Geraldine, Thomas of Shanid, younger son of Maurice FitzGerald and a relatively minor figure in the Norman invasion of Munster in the late twelfth century. By 1300, however, the family controlled the fertile lands of north Kerry, from its base at Tralee, and much of Limerick, from its castles at Adare, Askeaton and Kilmallock. In effect, the earls of Desmond took over much of the territory which the O Briens had occupied in the tenth century under Brian Boru. They felt, as conquistadores, that they did not owe their position to Crown assistance, a fact which helps to explain the ambivalent attitude and behaviour of Maurice FitzThomas.

Thanks to the researches of Professor G. O. Sayles ('The Rebellious First Earl of Desmond', in J. A. Watt, J. B. Morrall and F. X. Martin, eds., *Medieval Studies Presented to Aubrey Gwynn S. J.* (1961)), we know a great deal more than once seemed possible about FitzThomas. During the thirty years of his active political life he was involved in two prolonged clashes with the Crown (1329–33 and 1339–44) as well as numerous small-scale incidents. In 1329 he was the leader of a conspiracy whose members planned to make him king of Ireland and to divide the country

among themselves. During a further period of unrest he was accused of usurping royal authority and of protecting and harbouring rebels. Eventually, in 1343, the royal justiciar marched against him, took the castles of Askeaton and Castle Island and hanged the earl's steward. In 1346 Desmond surrendered and went to London to make his submission. In 1355 he returned, this time as justiciar. In 1356 he died.

Professor Sayles' judgement on all this is that 'for the second quarter of the fourteenth century, the activities of the first earl of Desmond made orderly government in the south-west of Ireland very largely impossible'. That is, in effect, the viewpoint of the Crown on 'law and order'. We know, however, from the involvement of the justiciar in the assassination of MacMurrough in 1283 that Crown officials themselves were quite capable of behaving illegally in the cause of 'law and order'.

What is interesting about Desmond's behaviour is that he confined his attention very largely to bringing pressure to bear upon royal officials, centres of royal power and Crown-controlled towns, such as Limerick and Youghal. In 1330, for example, he ordered Sir Thomas FitzGulber to publicise a prohibition that neither the sheriff nor any other servant of the king was to be obeyed. When, a few days later, Brian O Brien slew the sheriff, Desmond made 'great wassail' with him in celebration. Later in the same year, when the deputy justiciar ordered a new sheriff to take action against O Brien, Desmond commanded him to return O Brien's horses and cattle. In 1332 the royal stronghold at Bunratty Castle was destroyed by O Brien and MacNamara, presumably with Desmond's blessing.

It seems clear from this and other episodes that Desmond was attempting to set up a 'palatinate' in which he would be the sole source of political and legal authority. Thus he held a court at Dungarvan at which he issued fines and distraints. He appointed his own constable at Bunratty. He ejected royal bailiffs from the barony of Inchiquin and held his own court there. He issued pardons and ordered executions. He intervened in legal disputes or encouraged others to do so. He seized cattle from a certain John of Byford after John had refused to become 'his man'. All this indicates Desmond's wish not to destroy law and order but to become the fount of law and order in this particular part of Ireland. The alternative to a resident lord was the intervention of royal officials on behalf of an absentee monarch. Judging from the support which Desmond received from Irish and Norman alike his attitude was viewed sympathetically.

Part of the explanation for Desmond's outlook may be sought in the various attempts which were made by the royal administration to 'resume' control of land which, it was argued, had been acquired without appropriate legal authorisation. Desmond, as the husband of an O Brien, was open to charges of intermarriage with the king's enemies. The Statutes

of Kilkenny, passed in 1366 but anticipated in legislation passed fifteen years earlier in 1351, were clearly aimed at such lords as the earls of Desmond. From time to time throughout the fourteenth century the Crown through its deputies and eventually in the person of King Richard II made attempts to assert its authority, but without lasting effect. The relative abundance of evidence dealing with parliaments and lord deputies has perhaps tended to mislead historians. There never was a 'royal lordship of Ireland' during the late medieval period. It existed only in the minds of lawyers and administrators. The reality of power in the southern half of Ireland rested with the great feudal earldoms and not with the administration, even though the Crown might 'show the flag' when the situation seemed to require symbolic action. The career of the first earl of Desmond illustrates the success of a 'feudal resurgence' against the Crown. For two centuries and more the key to understanding the course of events in the southern half of Ireland lay in the Geraldine centres at Askeaton and Maynooth and in the Butler-controlled castles at Cahir and Kilkenny.

In the northern areas of Ireland, there was no semblance of an 'imperial presence' after the Bruce episode. Power rested to a great extent with the rival dynasties of O Neill and O Donnell, each of which would look back to a shadowy Uí Néill genealogy. The realities of power rested, however, not upon descent but military retinues. The O Donnells came to power and retained it thanks to gallowglasses imported from the Isles. The MacSweeneys, MacSheehys, MacDowells and other clans of *galloglaich* played the same role in Ireland as indentured retainers did in fifteenth-century England. Their reward was land, in the MacSweeneys' case, on the estuary of the River Moy. In 1373 when O Neill negotiated a treaty he was accompanied by MacDonnell, 'captain of the Scots dwelling in Ulster'. One of the O Connors married a MacDonnell and received 120 *galloglaich* as his dowry. At the end of the fourteenth century, gallowglasses moved into the Glens of Antrim and set up a lordship at Dunluce. In the early seventeenth century the MacDonnell earl of Antrim took his name 'Somhairle' from 'Somerled', the twelfth-century ancestor of the MacDonalds and MacDougalls.

It seems clear that during this period the north of Ireland fell within a sphere of influence whose centre was the lordship of the Isles. Ulster, in fact, was the Irish equivalent of the border area between England and Scotland. In such a twilight zone, the O Neills and the O Donnells, who were themselves hereditary enemies, were able to play off one side against the other. When Manus O Donnell wrote to James IV of Scotland, asking for assistance, he referred to his father's earlier association with the Scottish Crown. James, in his reply, described O Donnell as his 'most devoted

subject'. The O Neills for their part looked to the English monarchy for support. This situation persisted until the beginning of the seventeenth century, when, in a fundamental political shift, James VI of Scotland became also king of England, and the *raison d'être* of these marcher lordships disappeared.

The symbolism of these Gaelic regimes was 'traditional' in character, though the tradition may have been recent in origin. The Gaelic lords were careful to legitimise their behaviour by surrounding themselves with the cultural trappings of an earlier age. Thus learned families from south and west Ireland were able to find employment with the northern chiefs. Few episodes are more revealing, however, than the installation of a new MacWilliam under the auspices of Hugh Roe O Donnell in 1595. O Donnell summoned the eight claimants to the chiefry to meet him at Tyrawley. The rath where the 'election' took place was surrounded by four lines of troops, O Donnell's own personal guard, the troops of Tir Connell, the gallowglasses of the MacSweeneys and 'the men of Connacht'. O Donnell's own nominee was selected and three of the seven defeated candidates were placed in bonds. O Donnell seems to have chosen other chiefs in similar fashion, on other occasions.

As in Scotland, there were significant differences between north and south. The north was the Irish equivalent of Highland society and it was here that the main clusters of Irish hereditary learned families were to be found in the later middle ages. Each of the Gaelic elite families, like the MacDonalds of the Isles, had its own bards, senachies and brehons. Thus the O Cleirigh family, one of whose members was to take his part in producing the Annals of the Four Masters, were historians to the O Donnells. It was Luigh O Cleirigh who produced an official life of Hugh Roe O Donnell in the early seventeenth century. One of the last families to survive the Cromwellian debacle were the MacFirbisigh, bards to the O Dowds. The last representative of this culture was Roderick O Flaherty in the remote parts of west Galway during the early eighteenth century.

In the southern half of Ireland there was a different situation thanks largely to the dominance of the powerful Norman lordships of Kildare, Desmond and Ormond. In certain areas, there was indeed an 'Irish resurgence' in the sense that local Gaelic-speaking elites gained control of territory once occupied by the Normans. But the concepts both of 'Irish' and of 'resurgence' are misleading if they are taken to imply either nationality or the regaining of land by the original holders. Much of the best land remained in the possession of the Normans. Relatively poor areas, though large in acreage, were now controlled by such families as MacCarthys, MacMurroughs, O Mores and MacGiolla Padraig. There was a marked contrast, for example, between the MacCarthy territory of Duhallow in

the narrow upper valley of the Blackwater and the attractive Norman land of Mallow and Charleville in the lower valley. A similar contrast existed between the MacCarthy land of Muscraige in the upper Lee valley and the good land further down. In the Barrow valley, further north, the bleak moorland of Fassadinin offered shelter for the O Brenans, while the fertile valley remained in the hands of the colonists. The 'Celtic Rally' was more of a 'Celtic Survival'.

At the end of the thirteenth century, the political future of the British Isles seemed to be directed towards a unified Norman ascendancy. In the event, the ascendancy dissolved into a number of independent or semi-independent units. The 'Norman Scots' declared for a kingdom of Scotland. In Ireland, their equivalents settled for a real autonomy beneath a vague royal overlordship. In Wales, the great marcher lords, after meeting the challenge of Edward I, survived for another century or more. All this was made possible by the decision of 'England' to seek an imperial future in France, a venture which turned into the Hundred Years War.

The characteristic unit of society during this period was the 'Norman' feudal lordship, or, in the west of Scotland and over much of Ireland, feudal lordship in its Gaelic guise. Though it is tempting, and perhaps unavoidable, to refer to 'Ireland', 'Scotland' and 'Wales', each of these 'polities' was in fact remarkably fragmented. Even England, with its marcher areas in the north and west, was far from unified. The 'paradigm' which governed political attitudes is best characterised as 'feudal' in the sense that security was felt to lie not in allegiance to a distant and perhaps ineffective Crown but in the service of a local magnate or those linked to him.

Change in the direction of a new set of political assumptions came first in south-east England, with its great trading metropolis of London. 'Progress', associated with literacy and with the growth of market relations, seemed to lie with a more powerful monarchy. The same phenomenon was also to be observed in south-east Scotland. By the early sixteenth century few areas of the British Isles can be said to be entirely immune to the influence of such agencies of change, though felt least in the west of Scotland and the north of Ireland. Such factors as the growth of population, the increased use of artillery and warships made further change possible.

The shift which was taking place has been characterised by sociologists and historians in various ways, though usually with some implication of 'modernisation'. Clearly, profound changes were likely to take place. What was not clear was the direction. It was by no means inevitable, for example, that Scotland should fall under English dominance. Nor was it

inevitable that the English government should decide to attempt a second conquest of Ireland. Models for possible futures could have resembled those offered by Switzerland, the Habsburg empire and Italy as much as those of France and Spain. As much was to depend upon decision-making as upon 'historical trends'.

In this chapter little emphasis has been placed upon the 'Wars of the Roses'. Shakespeare in his history plays made these a central feature of English history, marking the transition from the anarchy associated with usurpation to the blessings of Tudor monarchy. From a 'British Isles' standpoint the 'Wars of the Roses' may be seen as the final chapter in the decline and fall of the post-Norman empire. During the late fifteenth century, Scotland, Ireland and Wales were left largely to their own devices and even smaller communities such as the Isle of Man and Cornwall, which deserve more attention than has been given to them here, enjoyed a good deal of independence. In a fuller British Isles version of the Wars of the Roses, the role of the two Yorkist pretenders, Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck, would be given more emphasis. Both landed in Ireland, in 1487 and 1491 respectively. Simnel was crowned in Cork. Warbeck, with the support of the Fitzgerald earls of Desmond and Kildare, claimed to be the duke of York, son of Edward IV. Warbeck's travels in search of the Crown during the 1490s took him to Scotland and Cornwall and again to Cork in 1497. He was executed in 1499. Warbeck, like Richard II before him, and James II later, was attempting to play the 'Irish card' as a means of gaining power. When the English 'core' was divided, as it was during the Wars of the Roses, the 'periphery' could be of considerable political importance.

Postscript

Chapter 6 dealt with what is often termed somewhat vaguely 'the Later Medieval Ages'. In the context of 'British Isles History' the two centuries c.1314 to c. 1530 may be seen constituting a period in which pressure of the south-eastern 'core' upon the rest of the archipelago was for various reasons reduced. Shakespeare's 'history' plays, based on Holinshed's *Chronicles*, offered what was in many ways the dominant Tudor interpretation of how this came about. Thus in his interconnected series of plays, *Henry VI*, he showed how an overseas adventure went badly wrong and led to a bitter civil war. In *Richard II* we are shown how a revolution took place which led to political instability. A major theme of *Henry IV* is the uncertainty created by the Lancastrian Revolution of 1399, creating a dilemma which was solved at least temporarily by Henry V's decision to invade France, but which in due course created the unrest which Shakespeare

dramatised in *Henry VI*. Shakespeare's view still remains influential and will no doubt remain so but it should be not be treated as an orthodoxy. In many ways of course he, like his source Holinshed's *Chronicles*, was providing his audience with a version of events favourable to the Tudors. Holinshed itself may be read only by scholars but the popularity of Shakespeare ensures that the Tudor version of the fifteenth century, according to which they brought stability to a troubled kingdom, will remain central. It should be noted, however, that Shakespeare, supreme dramatist that he was, often, perhaps always, provided an ironic twist to his commentary. Thus the famous soliloquy referring to 'this sceptred isle' continues in terms which lament the way in which 'this dear, dear land' is now leased 'like a tenement or pelting farm'. The speech itself is given by a nobleman, John of Gaunt, who may be seen as symbolising a decaying feudal nobility. Ambiguity always remains even in his history plays, leaving room for alternative interpretations for characters or events. A recent example of the shape which such an alternative view of late medieval England might take is now provided by Gerald Harriss in his powerful study *Shaping the Nation; England 1360–1461* (Oxford, 2005), in which he tries to undermine the grip which the Tudor version of events has upon our understanding of late medieval England.

Shakespeare was largely concerned with England and its problems but in several of these plays he refers to a wider 'British Isles' context. In *Henry VI*, for example, we are shown how Richard of York, who had been appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1450, encouraged Jack Cade's rebellion and then attempted himself to gain power. In *Richard II* it is the King's absence in Ireland which encourages his opponents to mobilise against him. In *Henry IV part I* Shakespeare's historical picture includes Wales in the shape of Owen Glendower, Scotland, and in the person of Hotspur, Northern England. *Henry V* is largely concerned with France but there is an important speech which refers to the return of Essex from Ireland in 1601 (Act V Chorus). This, though an anachronism, indicates that Shakespeare wants us to be aware of events outside Westminster. There are, in addition, several scenes in which the multi-ethnic character of Henry's army is portrayed, the Anglo-Irishman MacMorris and the Welshman Fluellen being notable examples. Shakespeare's history plays are often discussed in solely English terms and he was, of course, a London-based dramatist. But particularly in *Henry IV part I* there is no doubt that he provides a dramatic setting which goes beyond the south-east. In *MacBeth*, of course, he moved north of the border, taking advantage of the union of the crowns, after 1603. *Lear* and *Cymbeline* also have fascinating historical implications which are now being explored by scholars.

The story of England dramatised in the history plays is that of a society which is being torn apart by faction. As suggested in Chapter 6 this is not the whole picture. Nevertheless it does provide some indication as to why politics on the periphery were able to achieve a greater freedom of action and indeed influence or attempt to influence the course of events in England itself.

The break-up of the post-Norman empire was most obvious in the case of Scotland where a new sense of national consciousness became evident. As we have seen, during the twelfth century, in spite of the earlier incorporation of the Picts of eastern Scotland into a Gaelic Kingdom, there were clearly differentiated ethnic groups in north Britain. However, in the face of what was perceived as the aggression of Edward I, Robert the Bruce (sc. 'de Brus' of French origin) mobilised successful resistance from Bannockburn (1314) onwards. The ideology which lay behind this was expounded in a document of 1320, which has come to be known as the Declaration of Arbroath (a document unmentioned in the first edition of this book). The Declaration itself, which was in fact a letter to Pope John XXII, had a chequered history, disappearing from sight for a long period before reappearing in a printed version in the late seventeenth century. But the version of history to which it appealed was strongly established and became the standard version of Scottish history expounded in John of Fordun's *Chronicle of the Scottish Nation* (c. 1384). It later influenced George Buchanan in his *History of Scotland* (1582). The events of the early fourteenth century thus led to the creation of a Scottish identity resting upon the 'fact' that the Scots, after travelling from Scythia and Spain, conquered the Scottish Kingdom from the Britons, Picts, Norse and Angles! 'Within their realm', it was claimed, 'have reigned one hundred and thirteen Kings of royal stock, never an alien upon the throne' (quoted in Ferguson, *The Identity of the Scottish Nation* (1998), p. 42).

The success of Robert Bruce and the survival of an independent state in north Britain was to have long-standing consequences for England. In due course Scotland became a staunch ally of France, which it saw as its guarantor of independence. English governments for their part sought repeatedly to neutralise the threat from the north. The creation of a Scottish problem was thus a legacy of the post-Edwardian years. It is a story for which William Ferguson provides an illuminating commentary in his book *The Identity of the Scottish Nation: A Historic Quest* (Edinburgh, 1998). Professor Edward Cowan has written a lively account in *For Freedom Alone* (East Lothian, 2003). Professor Roger Mason's brilliant article 'Scotching the Brit: History and National Myth in Sixteenth Century Britain' is also essential reading (see R. A. Mason, *Scotland and England 1286–1815* (Edinburgh, 1987), pp. 60–84).

Professor R. R. Davies' book *The British Isles 1100–1500: Comparisons, Contrasts and Connections* (Edinburgh, 1988) may also be mentioned. This contains an illuminating article on 'The Common Law of Scotland and the Common Law of England', revising to some extent the orthodox view that the period after 1314 marked 'a Dark Age' of Scottish legal development. For students of the British Isles this volume also contains valuable essays on 'The Scots Invasion of Ireland 1315' and on 'Scotland's Celtic Fringe in the Late Middle Ages: The MacDonald Lords of the Isles and the Kingdom of Scotland' (by Alexander Grant).

It is important also to note that Scotland was not the simple entity to which the Declaration of Arbroath referred. The writ of the new monarchy did not run in all parts of the Kingdom. In particular the Lordship of the Isles enjoyed a *de facto* independence. Indeed Professor Steven Ellis now encourages us to think in terms of a wider Gaelic-speaking society ('the Gaeldhealteacht') which existed on both sides of the narrow seas. The rise of this 'polity' may be termed 'a Gaelic resurgence' but it was not, in Ellis' view, a precursor of the existence of the Irish nation, but of a language-based community which was neither Irish nor Scottish but 'Gaelic' (see 'The Collapse of the Gaelic World, 1450–1650, *Irish Historical Studies* (November 1999), pp. 449–69).

So far as Ireland is concerned, Katherine Simms, *From Kings to Warlords: The Changing Political Structure of Gaelic Ireland in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1987) is also valuable. In this book she challenges the entrenched nationalist view that there was a Gaelic resurgence. In her opinion, 'The transformation of the Gaelic ruling classes was not unconnected with changes which were taking place elsewhere in Europe at the end of the middle ages and the beginning of the early modern period.' One such change was the rise of an Irish version of 'bastard feudalism' in which powerful chiefs relied upon their own mercenary forces. Thus Gaelic society was not completely distinctive.

The contribution of literary scholars to the debate over English nationalism has also been very important. Philip Schwyzer's study, *Literature, Nationalism and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales* (Cambridge, 2005), provides a stimulating commentary upon the issues involved.

7   The making of an English empire

In the early sixteenth century, a new period began in the history of the British Isles. It was characterised by the emergence of an 'English empire', or, more precisely, an empire based on the wealth, population and resources of southern England over the rest of the British Isles, and, in due course, over the east coast of North America and the West Indies. In purely English terms this was 'the Age of the Tudors' marked by the victory of Henry Tudor at Bosworth Field in 1485 followed in due course by the long reigns of Henry VIII (1509–47) and Elizabeth (1558–1603). From our perspective of 'British Isles' history, 1603 was a key date in that it marked 'the Union of the Crowns' of England and Scotland and confirmed the defeat of Hugh O'Neill at the battle of Kinsale in 1601. The early decades of the seventeenth century also witnessed the plantation of Ulster as well as the establishment of English colonies in North America. By the end of the seventeenth century a new English empire had come into existence, based upon naval power, a neglected aspect of the story but now the topic of a master work by Professor N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Sea* (London, 2002).

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, after the decline of the 'post-Norman empire', independent centres of local power existed in many areas of the British Isles. By the mid-seventeenth century these were incorporated within a larger whole. Even Scotland, which had been independent for so long, was conquered by Cromwell's armies in 1650 and eventually brought into a parliamentary union with England in 1707. During the years 1580–1640 large-scale emigration, which had been characteristic of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, was resumed. Ireland was now once again to be a prime attraction for colonists from Scotland, Wales and England. What was new was the establishment of colonies along the eastern seaboard of North America, under such names as New England or Virginia. It was not until after the Anglo-Scottish union of 1707 that a fully British empire can be said to have begun to emerge.

This imperial control was exercised in different ways. For much of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth, the north of
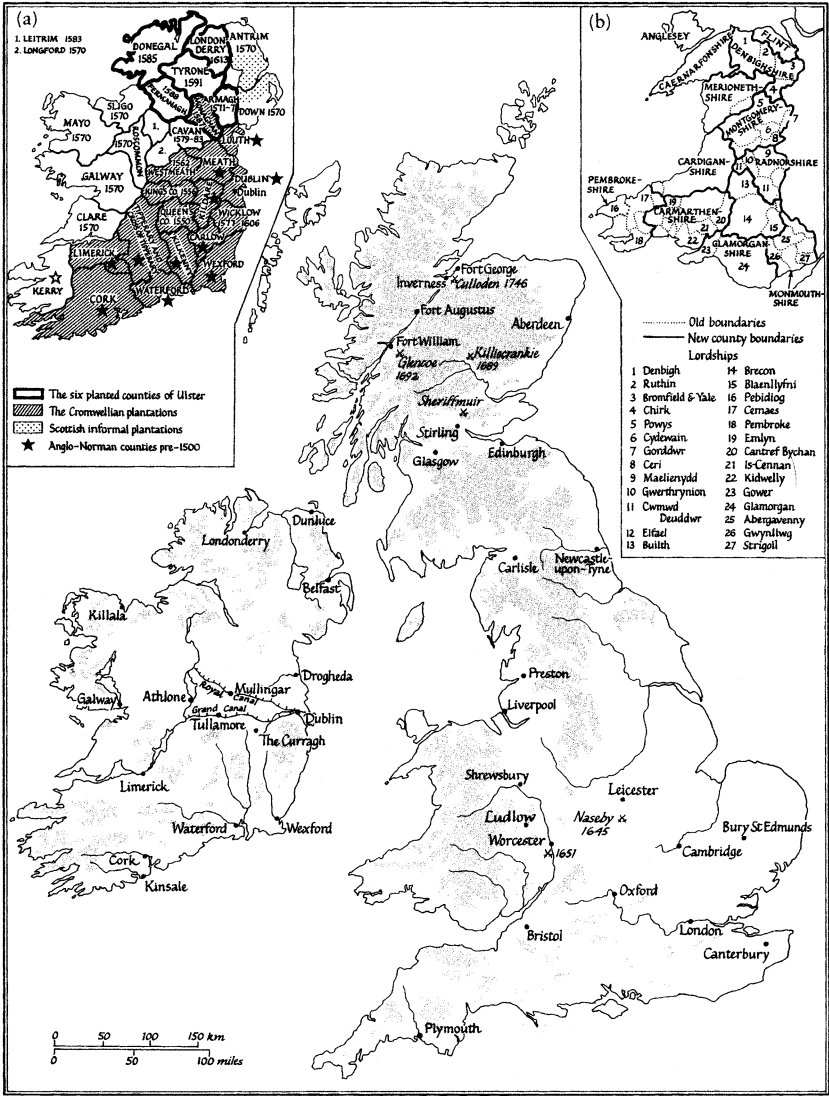
Map 15. The English empire, 1536–1690.

England was governed by a specially created council. Wales also, though joined to England in the Act of Union of 1536, was still thought enough of a special problem to merit government by the Council for Wales. In Ireland, the English government was represented by a lord deputy, ruling with the aid of a parliament which was eventually dominated by the new

colonists. In Scotland, the government of Elizabeth, having brought John Knox and the reformers to power in 1560, enjoyed a good deal of indirect influence in the second half of the sixteenth century, which was increased when James VI of Scotland succeeded to the English Crown in 1603. If the later middle ages in Scotland had been marked by a Scottish link with France, the early modern period witnessed the gradual incorporation of Scotland within a London-based empire.

Naval power aside, there were several factors which made the emergence of an 'English empire' possible. The rise of the English cloth industry in the south created a society which was more prosperous, more heavily populated and better endowed with towns and markets than the rest of the British Isles. The south of England also enjoyed the advantages of political, administrative and economic centralisation around the capital, London. Indeed it would be hard to overestimate the significance of London as a centre of power, with its population ten times that of its nearest rivals, Norwich and Bristol. The commercial wealth of London made it possible for governments to draw upon financial resources which were totally beyond the range of other societies within the British Isles. Oxford and Cambridge, 'reformed' by Henry VIII, were closely tied to the state and the national church. The Inns of Court were also very much part of the metropolitan scene. Now that the long imperial adventure in France was over, southern England was in a position to impose its authority upon the rest of the British Isles, should its rulers wish to take that course.

An observer in 1500 might well have forecast that the ties linking southern England with the rest of the British Isles would remain largely commercial in character. Already it was clear that the markets of London and other large towns such as Norwich and Bristol were attracting raw materials from Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Irish and Welsh wool, Scottish and Welsh cattle, coal from the north of England were being drawn to the south. What could hardly have been foreseen were the political and religious changes which led to much closer English involvement (or, reinvolvement) in Ireland and Scotland.

So far as Ireland was concerned, the choice facing Whitehall was whether to be content with a policy of 'sober ways, politic drifts, and amiable persuasions' exercised indirectly through a great Anglo-Irish magnate like the earl of Kildare or to intervene more directly through an English lord deputy. It was under Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's chief minister during the 1530s, that the decision was taken to overthrow the Kildare ascendancy and to rule, so far as possible, from London. In 1537 six of the FitzGeralds including 'Silken Thomas', who had risen in revolt in 1534 against Cromwell's policy, were hanged at Tyburn.

Figure 23. *Portrait of Henry VIII*

The reign of Henry VIII (1509–47) was of revolutionary significance in the history of the British Isles. In England the Reformation centralised control of the Church as never before. Northern and western England now formed part of the new Church-state and Wales also now fell increasingly under direct government control. Ireland, hitherto a lordship, was proclaimed a kingdom in 1540, a shift which carried with it long-term consequences for Church and State, including ownership of land. Henry also attempted, in the 'Rough Wooing' (1546), to establish a foothold in Scotland although this failed. English success had to wait until the reign of Elizabeth.

After some hesitation, the administration pressed ahead with an 'anglicising' policy of 'surrender and regrant' in those areas of Ireland where the Irish system of landholding based upon the rights of the kinship group prevailed. An English-style system was to be introduced in which the rights of the kin would be converted into freehold transmitted by primogeniture. Though there was some alternation between force and persuasion during the middle years of the century, there was as yet no hint of a full-blooded policy of conquest and colonisation. For much of this time the pro-English landlords of the east coast (sc. 'The Pale') enjoyed a good deal of indirect influence at court and their voice was raised in favour of the peaceful extension of anglicisation. It was not until the 1570s, largely in response to a growing threat from Philip II's Spain, and after the publication of the papal bull *Regnans in Excelsis*, deposing Elizabeth, that the die was cast in favour of a more forceful policy, under the auspices of Sir Henry Sidney and his followers.

The model for this Irish policy was Wales. Wales was seen by these men as an example of a 'backward' society successfully 'modernised' under English auspices. Sidney was lord president of Wales, an office which he held until his death in 1586. Perrot, who served as lord president of Munster before his appointment as lord deputy in 1584, came from Haverfordwest in 'anglicised' Pembrokeshire. To Sidney and Perrot the success of English policy in Wales lay in replacing a traditional landholding system based upon kinship and gavelkind with an English-style squirearchy and freeholders. Reforms were backed by a strong executive in the shape of a Welsh equivalent of the Star Chamber, the Council for Wales, with the power to appoint sheriffs and justices of the peace. Ireland was to be ruled in a similar fashion by lord presidents appointed to replace the great magnates and by an Irish equivalent of the Star Chamber ('Castle Chamber') in Dublin.

This extension of southern English criteria of 'law and order' to northern England, Wales and Ireland after two centuries of withdrawal was not a simple task. It was made more complicated by being interconnected with the religious changes of sixteenth-century Europe. Thomas Cromwell, the administrative reformer, was also a religious reformer of Lutheran views. It was during Cromwell's years of power that the influence of the London government was placed behind a Lutheran-style Reformation in England under a 'Godly Prince'. With Cromwell's backing, a 'magisterial Reformation' based upon reform from above was introduced into Ireland and Wales and, after the failure in 1536 of the Pilgrimage of Grace, into northern England. The symbols of change were the royal supremacy, the translation of the Bible into the vernacular and the dissolution of the monasteries.

For the first half of the sixteenth century, Scotland, as a client state of France, remained largely untouched by these changes. Thirty years after defeating the Scots at Flodden (1513), the English monarchy still found it difficult to exercise political influence in the Scottish Lowlands. During the 1540s in a campaign known as the 'Rough Wooing' an English army invaded Scotland, but at the end of it French power seemed to be as strong as ever, under the Regent, Marie de Medici. The heir to the Scottish throne, Mary, was sent for her education to France, where she was betrothed to the Dauphin. What made a Scottish revolution possible was the outbreak of the wars of religion in France, which weakened the French monarchy and made it possible for Elizabeth to support a pro-English faction in Scotland. During the 1560s the balance turned decisively in favour of the Reformation in the Scottish Lowlands. Henceforth, the future of Scotland was closely associated with that of England.

The history of England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has been distorted by a tendency among historians to write about England without relation to other cultures of the British Isles. There has also been an additional and related tendency to assume that there was a single, national, 'English' culture. Indeed the contemporary rhetoric of the period has lent itself to Anglo-centric interpretation. At least three influential currents of political and religious rhetoric were couched in terms of a single English nation. In Shakespeare's play *Henry V* the king's speech before Agincourt links the history of the monarchy and the nation as Henry cries 'God for England, Harry and St George'. There was, secondly, the religious rhetoric of John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* which spoke of 'England' as an 'Elect Nation' singled out by God as an instrument of Divine Providence. In the third place there was the rhetoric of the common lawyers which looked upon the 'Ancient Constitution' of 'England' as the legacy of the Anglo-Saxons. Monarchy, Reformation and common law were all powerful symbols of a national unity which was believed to have existed over many centuries.

As is often the case with nationalist interpretations of the past, however, such rhetoric concealed a more complex situation. The culture of London and the south-east, with relatively high rates of literacy, growing numbers of grammar schools, the expansion of colleges and halls at Oxford and Cambridge, a growth of industry in the clothing villages of the south and east and the development of London as a financial and trading centre, was taking on a character different from that of the north and west.

The growing importance of London and the south-east had been concealed during the Wars of the Roses, which were in effect a civil war between rival factions of the feudal nobility in the north and west (including the border counties of Wales). The reaction which followed upon the

Wars of the Roses made possible the rise of a monarchy based upon the power of London and the south-east. The law courts had of course long been centred upon London. To them were to be added during the early sixteenth century the courts of Star Chamber, and the court of Wards and Liveries. Star Chamber, though in theory a court, drew for its membership upon the privy council. It was indeed the government acting as a court in matters which were regarded as serious breaches of the peace. The court of Wards and Liveries was a department of state created for the financial exploitation of the Crown's position in the feudal hierarchy by controlling the disposal of the estates and marriages of tenants in chief.

There were in addition the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The Commons was far from being a political institution reflecting the outlook of 'England' as a whole. It is true that members were elected for each of the shires of England but the boroughs which elected the great majority of members were concentrated largely south of the Trent. The composition of the Lords also came increasingly to reflect the political and cultural dominance of the south-east, since after the dissolution of the larger monasteries, many of them in the north, their abbots ceased to be members of the House of Lords. After the Reformation the bishops became, even more than had been the case before, spokesmen for the south. The role of new laymen in the Lords, such as William Cecil, Lord Burghley, Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, Charles Brandon, earl of Suffolk, reflected the dominance of London and the south. There was also the educational preponderance of the south symbolised by the colleges of Christ Church at Oxford and Trinity College at Cambridge. Other foundations and grants such as St John's College at Oxford linked the universities more closely with London.

The growth in the influence of the south would no doubt have taken place in any event. Until the growth of an 'Atlantic economy' in the seventeenth century, English trade and industry was focussed upon the traditional link with the Netherlands. The growth of the cloth trade in the fifteenth century was accompanied by a rise in importance of London and the south-east. The prominent place of the East Anglian city of Norwich as the second city of the kingdom was a further indication of the important role of England, south of the Humber.

What provided an additional impulse towards the assertion of full cultural dominance by the south over the rest of England and Wales and in due course Ireland and Scotland was the impact of the Reformation. The decisive decades were the 1530s, the 1540s and the 1550s, during which the ideas of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin made rapid headway in the literate areas of the south and east. It is understandable that this should be the case, as it was elsewhere in other areas of high literacy throughout

western Europe. Without the support of the government, however, during the 1530s when Thomas Cromwell with his Lutheran sympathies was Henry VIII's chief minister and during the reign of Edward VI when the privy council was strongly Protestant it is unlikely that the reformers would have achieved success so swiftly.

During the 1530s the London-born Thomas Cromwell struck a decisive blow in the establishment of south-eastern supremacy by dissolving the monasteries, a revolutionary step which was completed during the early years of Edward VI's reign by the dissolution of the chantries, institutions dedicated to saying (sc. 'chanting') masses and prayers for the dead. During these years a revolutionary minority controlled the religious and political fortunes of the south. The repressive policies of Mary (1553–8) did not succeed in establishing the status quo. On the contrary there was a reaction against the Fires of Smithfield in which hundreds of Protestant martyrs perished. The accession of Elizabeth ensured that religious change would continue at a slower pace, though too slow for many advocates of more radical change, the so-called 'Puritans'.

The key role which was played in the spread of Reformation ideas by radical groups in the south was illustrated during the 1530s and 1540s by the reaction against them in the north and west. In 1536 the gentry of Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and much of England north of the Humber rose against changes in Church and State in the movement known as the 'Pilgrimage of Grace'. It is clear from the demands of the rebels that the north by and large was opposed to the growing religious, political and economic influence of the south. Cromwell's plan to dissolve the smaller monasteries provided the immediate cause of revolt, but the Pilgrims' demands for a parliament to be held at York, for the reversal of enclosures, for the restoration of Princess Mary, for the banning of books which propagated the new ideas and for the overthrow of Cromwell indicate unmistakably that the north was attempting to put an end to what was regarded as southern encroachment. In 1549 a similar reaction occurred in the south-west when Cornishmen revolted against the imposition of religious changes which originated in southern England.

Robert Kett's rebellion in Norfolk (1549) illustrates the contrast between north and south from a different perspective. In Norfolk, rebellion originated in a sense of disappointment with the progress of the Reformation. Unlike the Pilgrimage of Grace and the Cornishmen's Revolt, Kett's Rebellion pressed for the carrying out of the more radical aspects of the Reformation, notably by participation in the choice of ministers, wider access to education for the poor and the freeing of bondmen. There was also a strong sense of radicalism among Kett's followers, evidenced by the sentiment 'There are too many gentlemen in England.' Kett's

Rebellion was ruthlessly suppressed by the Duke of Norfolk, the largest landowner in the country, and Kett was executed but his memory has survived into the present day.

During the course of the sixteenth century the south succeeded in establishing dominance over the cultures of the north and west. Victories over the Pilgrimage of Grace of 1536, the Cornishmen's Revolt of 1549 and the Rising of the Northern Earls of 1569 brought under southern control areas of England which during the later middle ages had been largely autonomous. Some modern historians have been tempted to see these developments as a sign of progress. The work of Mervyn James, however, suggests that the values of northern culture deserve more sympathetic treatment than they had been accorded by the victors. Henry VIII's description of the county of Lincolnshire as 'one of the most brute and beastly of the whole realm' need not be taken literally. James indeed suggests that the values of northern society were different from but not necessarily inferior to those of the south. In his view, the lineage culture of the north placed loyalty to 'good lordship', 'blood' and 'name' above loyalty to a bureaucratic southern-based Crown.

As the Reformation made headway throughout England during the second half of the sixteenth century it began to lose whatever unity it possessed. Broadly, what Professor Collinson has termed 'the Religion of Protestants' (in *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559–1625* (1982)) began to polarise between those who accepted the idea of a national Church based upon conformity in ritual and those who demanded something more than external assent. A wide spectrum of possible attitudes existed, ranging from those who recognised some value in the Church of Rome to those who regarded the Pope as Anti-Christ. Perceptions of the English past also covered a wide span, from Shakespeare whose plays show a certain sympathy with the middle ages to John Foxe for whom the thousand years after Constantine was the millennium referred to in the Book of Daniel, when Satan ruled the world.

War with Spain in the last two decades of Elizabeth's reign kept polarisation in check to some extent. The early years of the seventeenth century, however, brought a re-emergence of the Counter-Reformation in Germany and a revival of ritualism in England itself. During the 1620s, when Spanish troops were advancing in the Netherlands and the ritually minded Bishop William Laud enjoyed political influence in England, English culture began to divide between ritualists and pietists, between 'Anglicans' (a nineteenth-century term but a convenient one to use here) and 'Puritans', between those who regarded episcopacy as a necessary foundation of a hierarchical Church and those who merely tolerated it as

convenient and, if circumstances warranted, capable of being dispensed with.

A decisive split did not occur until the crisis years of 1640–2 and the civil war which followed left an imprint upon English life which lasted until the early twentieth century. For a time, during the 1650s, the Puritans enjoyed power but the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 led to the creation of a profound divide between churchmen and dissenters. A penal code passed during the 1660s was not seriously modified until 1828. Dissenters remained 'second-class citizens' until that date and to a certain extent after it.

The events of the mid-seventeenth century thus offer a key to much of English culture during the two centuries which followed. They cannot be understood, however, entirely in English terms. As will be suggested below, the so-called 'English Revolution' was very much an affair of three kingdoms, influencing the course of history in Ireland and Scotland and being in turn influenced by them.

What happened within the English polity during this period was paralleled in Wales and Ireland and to some extent in Scotland. In 1521 the attainder of the duke of Buckingham carried out by Wolsey enabled the Crown to reassert its influence on the Welsh borders. The dissolution of the marcher lordships made possible the incorporation of the counties of Monmouthshire, Herefordshire and Shropshire into the kingdom of England, and the union of Wales with England during the years 1536–42 led to the opening up of Wales to direct intervention by the Westminster government.

Westminster also became more closely involved in the affairs of Ireland than had been the case in the later middle ages. During the course of the century, from the 1530s onwards, English lord deputies played an ever-increasing role in the running of Irish affairs. From 1541 Irish chiefs were persuaded or cajoled into accepting a policy of 'surrender and regrant', namely, the surrender to the Crown of land held by Gaelic forms of tenure and its reassignment to the chiefs and their followers under common law.

Full English involvement in Ireland did not come, however, until the reign of Elizabeth. Rebellions in Munster in the 1570s and 1580s and in Ulster during the 1590s were actively encouraged by Spain as a 'tit for tat' for English intervention in the Netherlands on behalf of Protestant rebels. It proved to be impossible for the English to stay out of Ireland and once there to reduce their military commitment.

In addition, active colonisation began for the first time since the early fourteenth century. The situation underwent a further change when James VI of Scotland succeeded to the English Crown. Ulster, which had been a frontier province against unwelcome Scottish intrusions, now lost

its military *raison d'être* (as did the border counties of northern England). The way was open for Scottish and English colonisation of the territories of O Neill and O Donnell after the Flight of the Earls in 1607, the city of London acting as a source of financing for the plantation of Londonderry. The affairs of the three kingdoms thus became closely intermeshed in what by early seventeenth-century standards was a major colonising project. O Neill and O Donnell did not vanish from history, however. In 1641 Sir Phelim O Neill led an insurrection against the Ulster plantation. It was this 'popish plot' plus an apparent massacre of Protestant colonists which had such a dramatic impact upon the English (and Scottish) political scene in 1641. The bitter debate in the House of Commons which led to the passing of the Grand Remonstrance in December 1641 took place in the aftermath of the Ulster rebellion and the 'Irish massacre'. On several occasions during the 1640s the Irish issue acted as an obstacle to successful negotiation between Crown and parliament. It seemed that peace in Ireland was only possible at the cost of concessions on matters of religion and state which were unacceptable to the parliamentary leaders. Sir John Temple's highly partisan account of the 'massacre' kept the memory of 1641 fresh in English (and Scottish) minds.

The close involvement of Irish affairs in English politics had already been a feature of the 1630s when Thomas Wentworth became lord deputy of Ireland. Wentworth saw himself as a reformer in Ireland, completing the anglicisation which had been advocated by Edmund Spenser and Sir John Davies. In the eyes of Puritan leaders such as Pym and Hampden, with whom Wentworth, though not himself a Puritan, had been associated in the 1620s, the autocratic policies of the lord deputy seemed to foreshadow the setting up of an absolute monarchy in England itself. Wentworth's record in Ireland provided much of the basis for his impeachment in 1640 and subsequent attainder and execution. The downfall of Wentworth indeed was a prime example of the way in which English and Irish affairs had become closely intertwined.

The same point may also be made about the relationship between England and Scotland. From 1560 onwards England replaced France as the dominant partner in Scottish politics. In 1568 Mary Queen of Scots fled to England and for the next two decades the Scottish queen became a centre of political intrigue which was only resolved by her execution in 1587. The close involvement of English political leaders in Scottish affairs continued during the 1590s as it became clear that James VI was the most likely candidate to succeed Elizabeth.

James VI tended to keep Scottish and English affairs separate but during Charles I's reign, the English Crown became more closely involved in the 'reform' of the Scottish Kirk on English lines. Archbishop Laud,

Charles I's chief minister, was blamed for attempting to introduce 'Popery' into Scotland, and a religious crisis developed which led to the signing of a National League and Covenant by disaffected elements in Scotland. This was followed by a resort to arms which led to the defeat of the royal army and the Scottish occupation of the English border counties in 1640. Opposition leaders in England welcomed the Scottish crisis as a means of breaking the political deadlock.

In 1642 civil war broke out in England between the forces of Crown and parliament. In recent decades historians have tended to discuss it as an 'English Revolution'. To treat it merely in English terms, however, is to lose sight of the ways in which the affairs of Scotland and Ireland raised the political temperature in English politics. The Irish 'massacre' of 1641 in particular played into the hands of the Puritan leaders. The 'No Popery' card was to be played on many occasions throughout the seventeenth century. Since English Catholics were in fact few on the ground, the potency of the cry of 'No Popery' is best explained in the context of the three kingdoms, where Ireland and to some extent Scotland and Wales were looked upon as centres of Papist disaffection.

In the framework of the three kingdoms, the civil wars may be seen as taking on the character of savage 'wars of religion' such as had occurred in France during the late sixteenth century and were occurring in Germany during the Thirty Years War (1618–48). The Irish 'massacre' in particular left an enduring mark. In 1644, for example, Montrose, the royalist general in Scotland, was denounced for having 'joined with a band of Irish rebels and mass-priests, who had, this two years bygone, bathed themselves in the blood of God's people in Ireland'. In 1645, 300 Irish women were butchered after the Covenanting victory at Philiphaugh. In 1646, O Neill's troops at Benburb gave the Scots no quarter. 'The rebels', it was said, 'had never such a heavy day of the Protestants.'

In England itself Charles I came increasingly to place his hopes of a royalist revival upon the arrival of aid from Ireland. Rumours that Charles was prepared to ally himself with Irish Catholic Confederates left him open to charges of 'Popery'. In 1643 it was said after the capture of the royalist earl of Antrim that 'the discovery of this plot did more to work upon most men than anything that had happened during these miserable calamities and civil wars of England, because it now seemed that there was a fixed resolution in the Popish party utterly to extirpate the true Protestant religion in England, Scotland and Ireland'. When news arrived that the earl of Ormond had agreed to a 'cessation' of arms with the Confederates in 1643 it was declared that this 'will tend not only to the utter ruin of themselves, but of all the Protestants in England and Ireland also'. The arrival in Ireland of a Papal nuncio, Archbishop

Rinuccini, in 1645 added further fuel to the propaganda war of the three kingdoms.

In 1648, it was the expectation of aid from Irish Catholics and Scottish Presbyterians which led Charles to gamble upon a successful outcome to a 'second civil war'. The rise of Cromwell and the extremist faction in the New Model Army, the exclusion of 'Moderates' from parliament in Pride's Purge and the subsequent execution of the king thus took place against a background of the three kingdoms, not merely of England. It was the expectation of what might happen as a result of Irish and Scottish invasion as much as the fear of English royalism which led to so violent a reaction on the Parliamentarian side. The crisis of 1648 in fact brings out the extent to which Charles saw himself as a king of the three kingdoms, not just of England, facing the problems created by a purely English parliament.

The interaction of the three kingdoms was to continue during the rest of the century. In 1660 it was the attitude of the Parliamentarian General Monck in Scotland and the Puritan leader Broghill in Ireland which made possible a peaceful Restoration. During the post-1660 years the Crown was faced in Ireland with the problem of dealing with a Cromwellian ascendancy, which was determined to hold on to the estates of former royalists. In 1685–8 James II's sympathy for the Irish royalists and his appointment of Richard Talbot, earl of Tyrconnell, helped to weaken his position in England and played an important role in his downfall. In turn the knowledge that he could count on Irish support led James to land in Ireland in 1689 and to use it as a base from which to regain his crown. It was no accident that the decisive battle of the English 'Glorious Revolution' should be fought on the river Boyne in 1690.

Scottish affairs also formed one of the strands of post-Restoration politics in England. Royal attempts to defuse religious bitterness in Scotland by issuing a Declaration of Indulgence establishing a certain measure of toleration led to reaction among the king's ultra-Tory episcopalian supporters.

It is, of course, possible to deal with the history of England during this period exclusively in English terms. To do so, however, makes it difficult to explain why the civil wars actually took place. Constitutional conflict over such matters as Ship Money appeared to have been resolved by the middle of 1641. What introduced a higher degree of emotion was the Irish rebellion of 1641 with its accompanying 'massacre' of Protestant settlers. This in its turn can only be explained against a background not merely of Anglo-Irish affairs but also those of Scotland.

The real 'English Revolution' of this period was in fact the English Reformation, the success of which in England and Wales brought about

further involvement in Ireland and Scotland. By the end of the seventeenth century an English empire had come into existence throughout the British Isles. As a consequence the histories of Ireland and Scotland cannot be understood in their own terms. Equally, however, the English were to find in dealing with rebellion in Scotland in 1715 and in 1745 and in Ireland in 1798 that they could not extricate themselves at will from the historical situation which had been created by the decisions taken during the seventeenth century.

The history of Wales during this period is not of such central importance as those of the three kingdoms proper. Nevertheless, the course of events in Wales helps to illustrate by comparison or contrast what happened in Ireland and Scotland. During the early middle ages, Welsh history had been closely interwoven with that of the great Norman barons. When the houses of Mortimer, Lancaster and Clare intervened in high politics they drew much of their power from the resources of their marcher lordships. During this period the border between England and Wales was effectively moved further west from the Severn to the Wye. The political and demographic crisis of the fourteenth century placed the colonial regime in Wales on the defensive (as was the case also in Ireland). The rebellion of Owain Glyndwr in the first decade of the fifteenth century struck a blow from which the 'Englishries' and colonial boroughs did not recover. It is true that after Glyndwr's defeat in 1406 a series of penal laws were placed on the statute book which recall the Statutes of Kilkenny in their severity, but in Wales, as in Ireland, restrictive legislation of this kind was as much a sign of weakness as strength. In theory, the Welsh were forbidden to dwell in boroughs, to take part in trade and to acquire land. In practice it was the 'Englishry' in Wales which declined in strength during the fifteenth century.

During the unsettled conditions of the Wars of the Roses, Welsh marcher lords were provided with the opportunity to intervene in English politics. The battle of Banbury in 1469 was regarded as a peculiarly Welsh disaster. The rebellion of Buckingham against Richard III in 1483 involved south Wales. But the most decisive contribution which Wales made was the support which it produced for Henry Tudor in 1485. Henry landed at Milford Haven and rallied Welsh support at Welshpool. Welsh troops enabled him to defeat Richard III at Bosworth. Welsh versions of British history enabled him to prop up a weak claim to the throne, a move which was followed up later by the naming of his eldest son Arthur. Henry repaid his debt to his Welsh allies by appointing them to key offices in north and south Wales and by naming Welshmen to the sees of St Davids and St Asaph. In due course the penal legislation against Welshmen holding office and acquiring land was also repealed, not without protest from the 'Englishry'.

The use of the terms 'Wales' and 'Welsh' is almost unavoidable in dealing with the history of this period. In fact, however, 'Wales' was still very much a 'geographical expression', lacking in cultural and social unity. The various contingents which joined Henry in 1485 were drawn from contrasting areas in Wales itself. The troops of William ap Griffith of Penrhyn and Richard ap Howell of Mostyn were northern clansmen who brought their own droves of cattle with them. The Herberts, in contrast, led feudal levies from the south-east. Rhys ap Thomas drew upon the Welsh-speaking heartland of Carmarthen. Linguistic differences divided Welsh-speakers in north and south. Wales was still a country divided by its history into several sub-cultures each with its own view of past and present.

The reign of Henry VII in many ways marked the end of a period rather than a new beginning. Signs of more radical change came with the rise to power of Wolsey and with the execution in 1521, at Wolsey's instigation, of the duke of Buckingham, the most powerful of the Welsh marcher lords. In 1531 Rhys ap Griffith, the grandson of Rhys ap Thomas, was executed on charges of treason, after incidents which anticipated events in Ireland involving 'Silken Thomas' and the FitzGeralds. In 1529 the young Rhys had challenged the authority of the royal chamberlain in south Wales, Lord Ferrers, who had been appointed to succeed Rhys ap Thomas after his death in 1525. The Crown was clearly challenging the 'Old Order' in Wales, as it was soon to do in Ireland. In 1536 the decisive shift came with the passing of an Act of Union, completed by further legislation in 1543. The Acts of Union completed the attack on feudalism which had been foreshadowed in 1521, with Buckingham's execution.

As with so much else in Henry VIII's reign, the Acts of Union formed part of the 'modernising' policies of Thomas Cromwell, though they were not completed until after his execution. The Norman empire in Wales which had been in existence since the late eleventh century was in effect dismantled. The marcher lordships were henceforth incorporated within an administrative system of already existing shires, such as Carmarthen, or amalgamated into new counties, Monmouth, Brecon, Radnor, Montgomery and Denbigh, freshly created at the Union. The legal autonomy of the lordships was done away with. The English common law was to be enforced throughout Wales, with English as the sole language of the courts though the need for translators long remained. The sheriff and the justice of the peace took over from marcher officials. Primogeniture in theory replaced partible inheritance, though, in actual fact, traditional practice based upon the desirability of sharing land among all the sons remained powerful at the local level for a long time to come. The border between Wales and England was clearly drawn for the first time. The border counties of Shropshire and Hereford were placed firmly within

England, though Hereford in particular contained Welsh-speaking communities. Wales itself was now the first province within an English empire.

The Acts of Union were part of an administrative revolution but what was intended in Whitehall did not necessarily happen on the ground. A century later, local aristocrats such as the Herberts and Somersets in south Wales and the Greys and the Wynns in north Wales were still powerful. During the civil wars of the mid-seventeenth century the Somerset earls of Worcester and the Herbert earls of Pembroke were key figures on the royalist and parliamentary sides respectively, and Raglan Castle and Pembroke Castle were both put to military use during the wars. But the earls of Worcester and Pembroke for all their local importance were not marcher lords in the old sense of the word. Their titles dated from the sixteenth century and they, like the earl of Leicester in north Wales, were essentially representatives of the English empire in Wales.

Much changed after the Acts of Union; much also remained unchanged. The distinctive cultures of north, south and west Wales embedded in kinship, land-holding and general outlook did not disappear overnight. Powys, already partitioned under the Normans, was redivided between the new county of Montgomery and the existing county of Merioneth though bardic tradition kept the memory of the old kingdom alive. The mountainous area of Gwynedd (today's Snowdonia) was resistant to change. Elsewhere, social divisions between 'Englishries' and 'Welshries' continued to influence behaviour. The county of Flint was divided between its Welsh and its English areas. The town of Hay-on-Wye was split between English and Welsh. The port of Haverfordwest retained its distinctively Flemish character. Parts of Pembroke were known as 'Little England'. Ethnic differences existed in Wales as they did in Ireland and Scotland. The inhabitants of 'English' Shropshire and Herefordshire were conscious of the presence of Welshmen in their midst. During this period, as earlier, the history of Wales cannot be written from a single 'national' point of view.

In Wales, as in England and Ireland, the 1530s were also marked by a religious revolution, the main material result of which was the dissolution of the Welsh monastic houses. The lands of Tintern passed into the control of the Somerset family. The Mansels acquired the lands of Margam. Church wealth in the form of tithes also passed into the hands of wealthy laymen. Far more than the so-called revolution of the 1640s, the Henrician Reformation in Wales was a social revolution which marked a breach between the medieval and the early modern period. The creation of an English interest in Wales, corresponding to similar groups in Ireland and Scotland, dates from these years. The power of these new families, the Wynns, the Vaughans, the Prices, was not to be challenged

until the nineteenth century, after industrialisation had wrought its own revolution.

In Wales, as in Ireland, the Reformation initially made little impact at the popular level. A Welsh translation of the Bible was produced in 1588 for use in churches and a smaller edition, the little Bible *(y Beibl Bach)*, in 1630, but in so dispersed and rural a society, with many local dialects, no single translation sufficed. In some ways, the Counter-Reformation, thanks to the support of such magnates as the Somerset earls of Worcester, had more success. From their base at Cwm, on the English border near Monmouth, a Jesuit mission operated in the early seventeenth century in conditions comparable to those in the north of England and in Ireland. As with the Reformation, so too with the Counter-Reformation, the challenge proved to be too great for the resources available. As a consequence, rural Wales remained, like rural Ireland and the Scottish Highlands, very much a traditional society in which local institutions such as the 'wise man' of the village, the fair, the wake and kinship ties retained their hold in the face of attempts at 'anglicisation' by an English-orientated gentry and clergy. It was not until the eighteenth century that these popular cultures finally collapsed in the face of Methodist denunciations. It was then that dancing, harp-playing and fiddling began to give way to a new popular culture based upon hymn-singing and the Sunday school.

During the early modern period, it is probable that the impact of the English food market was as powerful an instrument of social change as either the Reformation or the administrative revolution. In the Welsh Lowlands, farmers responded to the English demand for meat, butter, cheese and wheat. The upland farmers exported thousands of head of cattle to be fattened up in Shropshire and Herefordshire before being sold in the markets of London. The vale of Glamorgan was described as 'the Garden of Wales and for good cattle of all kinds the nursery of the West'. It was estimated that twenty-four Wynn farms in north Wales would sustain nearly 3,000 head of cattle annually. Wales had 245 fairs a year in 1602, over half of them in the five southern counties. As a consequence of growth in demand from England, pressures grew for enclosure on the English model. A class of gentry began to emerge from the general run of yeoman farmers and as the pressure upon pasture increased, traditional tenants complained of being deprived of common grazing, of free access to fuel and of the free use of summer houses for 'transhumance'. By the early eighteenth century, a class of anglicised gentry had come into existence. In some areas, such squires, together with an English-speaking clergy, were largely cut off from their Welsh-speaking tenants and labourers. English became the language of the law, of politics

Figure 24. *Mary, Queen of Scots (1541–87)*
The monument to Mary, Queen of Scots in Westminster Abbey may be seen as an ironic symbol of the union of the English and Scottish Crowns in 1603. Mary had been executed in 1587 on the command of her cousin Elizabeth, but when her son James became King of England in 1603 he ordered her remains to be transferred to Westminster where they now rest next to those of Elizabeth. The history of England and Scotland after the Union of the Crowns was marked by civil war, regicide and revolution, a future unforeseen when Mary's remains were laid to rest at Westminster.

and polite society. The gentry attended the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, though the growing dominance of English culture did not prevent some of the gentry from acting as patrons for Welsh scholarly works.

In Scotland, radical religious and social change came a generation later than in Wales. In July 1560 the French garrison in Scotland returned

home and the political connection which had linked France and the
Scottish Lowlands came to an end. Henceforth English influence was
to be dominant north of the border. Political change coincided with reli-
gious reformation. The Scottish Reformation, indeed, was successful in
its first stages thanks largely to English backing. John Knox, though Scot-
tish born, had taken an active part in the Edwardian Reformation and it
was English arms and money which helped Knox and his allies among
the nobles to overthrow the pro-French party in Scotland. The Bible
in English was to prove to be a formidable instrument of anglicisation.
Puritanism, ultimately defeated in England, had its greatest successes in
Scotland.

Scotland in the mid-sixteenth century was a country of two cultures
(three if Orkney, Shetland and the Norse counties of northern Scotland
are taken into consideration). The cultural and political balance of power
between Highlands and Lowlands still remained. The Gaelic-speaking
west was closer to Ulster than to the English-speaking Lowlands. The
MacDonalds of the Hebrides and the MacDonnells of Antrim saw them-
selves as sharing a common history which went back to the Three Colls
and Niall of the Nine Hostages. 'Feudal' culture survived in the High-
lands well into the eighteenth century long after it had been destroyed
in Ireland. With the coming of the Reformation, the cultural differences
between the two areas increased. In the Lowlands the long-term effect of
the Reformation was to replace 'feudal' loyalty with commitment to a par-
ticular religious persuasion. In the Highlands, even where the Reforma-
tion did make headway, it was associated with loyalty to a particular chief,
such as the earl of Argyll. The Lowlands, thanks to Puritan emphasis upon
Bible-reading, became a highly literate society. The Highlands remained
an oral culture throughout the early modern period. In the Lowlands,
strict observance of the Sabbath was regarded as a sign of godliness. In
1709, for example, the Kirk Session of Edinburgh, 'taking into considera-
tion that the Lord's day is profaned by people standing in the streets . . . as
also by idly gazing out at windows, and children and apprentices playing
in the streets, warn parents and threaten to refer to the civil magistrates for
punishment, also order each session to take its turn in walking the streets
on the sabbath'. In the Highlands, Sabbatarianism was to come much
later.

Within both Highlands and Lowlands, the Reformation intensified
internal differences. In the Highlands, conflict between the MacDonalds
and the Campbells, which had its origins in the later medieval period,
when the Campbells acted as the instrument of an expanding Crown,
at the expense of the MacDonald Lords of the Isles, was exacerbated
by Campbell acceptance of the Reformation. In the early seventeenth
century, the earl of Argyll attempted to plant Kintyre on lines similar to

those of the Ulster plantation. In the civil wars of the mid-seventeenth century, the Campbells took up the Covenanting cause; the MacDonalds in contrast, allied with their kinsman, the MacDonnell earl of Antrim, supported the Crown. In 1692, a Campbell regiment was involved in the massacre of a MacDonald clan at Glencoe. In 1746, in the aftermath of the Jacobite rebellion of '45, Captain Robert Duff RN reported to Argyll how he had dealt with Argyll's tenants, the Camerons, who had supported Bonnie Prince Charlie against the wishes of their hated landlord.

On the tenth instant [March 1746] at four in the morning I landed Lieut. Lindsay with the detachment of your regiment [the Scots Fusiliers] Captain Campbell with 20 men . . . a lieutenant and fiftyfive men from my ship with orders to burn the houses and destroy the effects of all such as were out in the rebellion.

When the land was leased out again, many of the beneficiaries were Campbells. So far as the Highlands were concerned, the Reformation led eventually to the victory of the English-backed clans, Campbells, MacKenzies and MacLeods, over the rest.

In the Lowlands also, existing regional differences seem to have become more marked as a consequence of the Reformation. In the north-east, ancestral territory of the Gordon earls of Huntley, episcopalian-ism flourished in a general atmosphere of social hierarchy. South of the Tay, where the lairds and towns made common cause, a Presby-terian form of Church government, giving wider scope to a 'middle class', made headway. In the south-west, for reasons which may go back to long-held resentment against a Normanised landowning class, the small farmers became 'Covenanters', stressing godliness above inher-ited status. During the civil wars of the mid-seventeenth century, the Covenanters supported a theocratic regime which abolished patronage and forced a sinful nobility publicly to admit its moral failures. During the Restoration period the south-west was disturbed by peasant revolts, which in their religious intensity resembled the 'Camisards' of southern France. Throughout the seventeenth century, episcopalians, Presbyte-rians and Covenanters contended for supremacy. Victory went finally to the Presbyterians, leaving their rivals with the status of 'second-class citizens'.

These internal conflicts, in both Highlands and Lowlands, had their own Scottish flavour. Throughout the early modern period, however, it became increasingly difficult to keep the history of 'Scotland' distinct from that of a wider 'English empire'. In the Lowlands, during the late sixteenth century, contending political groups of nobles depended for success in seizing and retaining power upon English support. The flight of Mary, Queen of Scots, to England in 1568 involved English politicians

more closely in Scottish affairs than ever before. For a Scottish noble such as James Douglas, earl of Morton, 'conformity with England' was the key consideration. For James VI, son of Mary, Queen of Scots, the Union of the Crowns was the main long-term aim of political strategy, and when it was achieved in 1603 he came to look upon the episcopal state Church of England as the example to be followed in Scotland. One of the rewards of the Union of the Crowns was the opening up of Ulster to Lowland settlement. From the mid-sixteenth century onwards, Scotland, which had enjoyed independence in the later middle ages, was drawn increasingly into a Britannic framework.

If there were rewards in this situation, there was also a price to be paid. In Charles I's reign, the Crown became a more active instrument of anglicisation than had been the case under James VI. The Lowland nobility were disturbed by secret royal plans to recover Church property and alienated tithes. Presbyterians south of the Tay resented the influence of the episcopalians of the north-east, who had found a powerful ally in the English Lord Treasurer, Archbishop William Laud. The new departure was symbolised in the creation of a bishopric of Edinburgh and the transformation of the kirk of St Giles into a cathedral. In Ireland, Charles I's minister Strafford succeeded in uniting Old and New English alike against him. In Scotland, Charles and Laud brought Kirk and nobility into common opposition, based upon a Presbyterian National League and Covenant (1638).

The National League and Covenant did not lead to greater national independence in the long term, however. One of the consequences of successful opposition to the Crown was to draw the Presbyterian leaders into closer ties with the English Puritans. The reformation of the Church of England on Presbyterian lines seemed possible and in 1643 Scottish Presbyterians and English Puritans joined in a Solemn League and Covenant. At the same time, in Ireland, a Scots army under Monro fought to defend the Ulster plantation against the Irish confederate forces of Owen Roe O Neill. In Scotland, Charles looked for aid to the Highlanders under the earl of Montrose, who in 1644 was joined by a force of MacDonalds and MacLeans under Alasdair Coll Ciotach (the 'left-handed', anglicised as 'Colkitto'). These MacDonalds had the backing of the earl of Antrim. In 1648, Charles in the aftermath of defeat hammered out an unlikely alliance between his Irish, English and Scottish supporters despite their religious differences. As we have seen, the so-called English civil war was essentially a war of the three kingdoms.

During the 1650s, after Cromwell's victories at Preston, Dunbar and Worcester, Scotland found itself incorporated within a wider
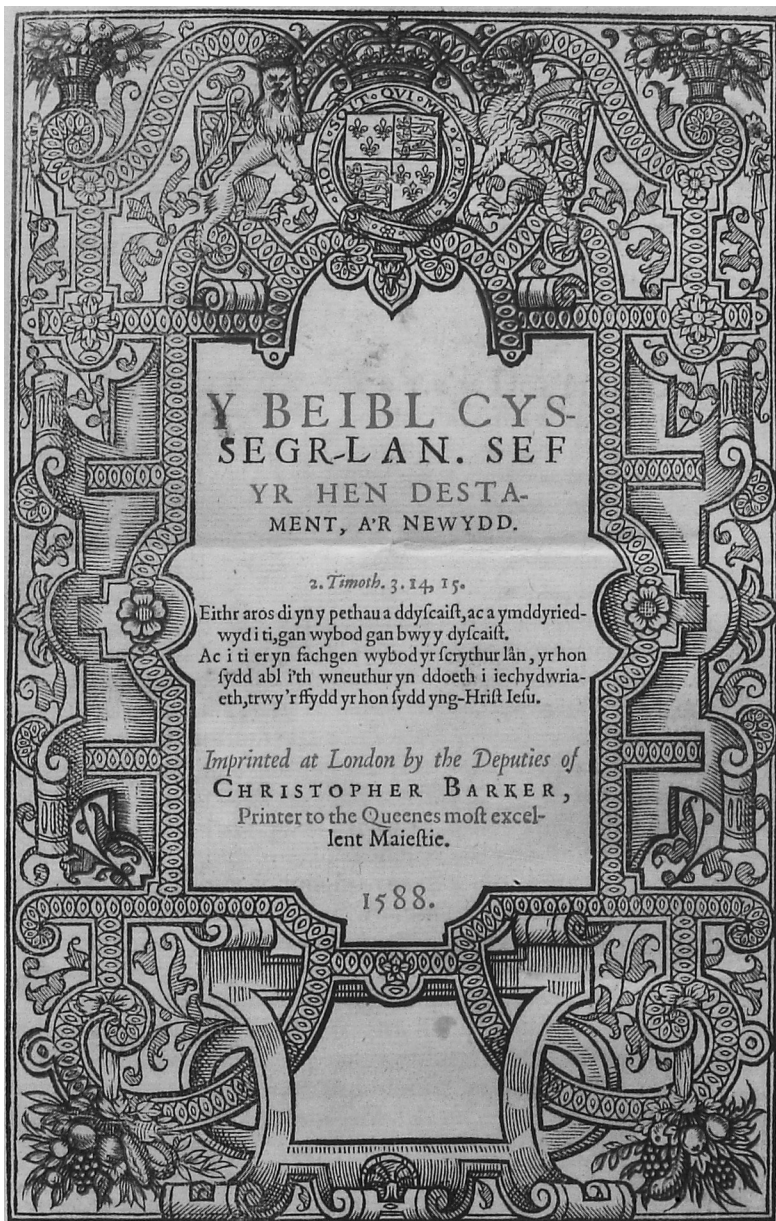
Figure 25. *The Bible in Welsh*
Bishop William Morgan's translation of the Bible into Welsh in 1588 was to leave a lasting impression upon Welsh identity. The Reformation in Wales became associated with the Welsh language and eventually with Welshness in general.

commonwealth, in which England was very much the dominant partner. The situation changed to some extent after the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, when Scotland regained some measure of autonomy, though English influence still remained strong. London backed an episcopalian form of Church government, under which James Sharp, a north-easterner and graduate of Aberdeen, became archbishop of St Andrews. Royal attempts to achieve a general compliance met with little success, however. In the south-west, Sharp was regarded as a traitor to the godly cause which he had once, as a former Covenanter, professed. His murder in May 1679 was a signal for a general rising in the area. The Covenanters' success proved shortlived and, with the accession of James II, a long period of episcopalian dominance seemed likely. In Scotland, as in England, however, James alienated his supporters by adopting pro-Catholic policies. The earl of Argyll, whose father had been executed, returned to lead the resistance and, after an initial military setback at Killiecrankie (1689), Presbyterianism was once again restored, this time, as it turned out, permanently. The episcopalians of the north-east, now without influence in London, turned to Jacobitism and the hope of a return of the Stuarts. In the south-west, the Covenanters, also a minority, soon broke away from the Established Church to found their own Associate Synod. Thus Scotland remained a deeply divided country, as divided in its own way as Ireland.

The history of Ireland during this period is often regarded as having followed its own distinctive path. In fact, however, the course of events in Ireland to a considerable extent resembled that of other areas which were incorporated within the English empire during the sixteenth century. In Ireland, as elsewhere in the British Isles, this period saw the collapse of feudalism. The resources of the state were mobilised to overthrow the private armies and jurisdictions of the great magnates, both Anglo-Norman and Gaelic. Gallowglasses, introduced into Ireland in the fourteenth century, were still a familiar feature of the Irish scene in the sixteenth century. The MacSheehys, the MacSweeneys and the MacDonnells still provided the basis of the military power of the earls of Desmond, and the Gaelic chiefs, O Donnell and O Neill, as they had done for so long. As indicated above, it was on the basis of such armies that chiefs like O Donnell were able to impose their own candidates upon chieftainries within their 'sphere of influence'.

It is difficult to recognise any sense of common nationality in this political world. In 1567 the MacDonnells of Antrim beheaded Shane O Neill who had taken refuge with them and sent his head, 'pickled, in a pipkin', to the royal administration in Dublin. Rivalries between the two great magnates of Munster, the earls of Desmond and Ormond, compelled

lesser lords to take sides in the interest of self-preservation. Sidney complained that many had 'never heard of other princes than Ormond or Desmond'. 'Feudalism' had in fact gone further in Ireland than it ever had in England or Scotland.

The revolts which took place in Ireland during the sixteenth century were the Irish equivalent of the Pilgrimage of Grace and the Rising of the Northern Earls, in the sense that they were attempts to retain an established feudal world against the unwelcome pressures of a 'modernising' state. What lent the struggle a particular intensity was that to these political and social tensions was added the emotional fervour of the wars of religion. Cultural differences also played their part in leading to charges of atrocity and counter-atrocity. Nevertheless, the success of the English government in reducing the power of the great magnates would scarcely have been possible had they not enjoyed the support of powerful interests within Ireland, notably the towns, which, in Ireland as elsewhere in western Europe, welcomed Crown support. Thus, in the rebellions of the 1570s, towns such as Cork and Galway and Kilkenny withstood attacks by local magnates.

The English administration could also count on the support of the landlords of a wide area round Dublin, the 'lords of the Pale', who remained aloof from any involvement in the Desmond rebellion. The O Briens of Thomond and the Burkes of Clanricarde and even the O Neills took a similar attitude. The Ormond interest also could generally be relied upon to support the Crown though some of the Butlers were involved in an attempt to overthrow a local effort at plantation. Later in the century, in Ulster, traditional enemies of O Neill and O Donnell refused to join in the Nine Years War. The ruling septs of Monaghan escaped plantation as a consequence. Clearly there were many among the Irish elite, Gaelic as well as Anglo-Norman, who welcomed the defeat of 'overmighty subjects' and were willing to cast in their lot, however reluctantly, with the Crown.

The decline of feudalism in Ireland had begun with the overthrow of the house of Kildare in the 1530s. This still left untouched the great 'pretendid palatinates' of Ormond and Desmond as well as the Gaelic and gaelicised chieftainries of the west and the north. Sidney established lord presidencies in Munster and Connacht, each with a military force at their disposal with the aim of replacing the authority of the magnates with that of the Crown. In 1576 the various 'countries' of Connacht were transformed into the English-style counties of Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon and Galway. In 1583 the power of Desmond was overthrown. In 1585 the Crown arrived at a 'composition' with the lords of Connacht whereby they agreed to pay a rent to the Crown, provide military service and

introduce the common law. For a time it seemed that Ulster also would follow the example of Connacht in submitting to peaceful assimilation. In 1595, however, Hugh O Neill who had enjoyed Crown support as earl of Tyrone, took the great gamble of resisting the advance of the English administration into his territories and rose in revolt, with Spanish support. The gamble failed. O Neill's defeat at the battle of Kinsale in 1601 marked the downfall of feudalism in Ireland.

A social and political revolution had taken place comparable to that which had occurred in England and Wales during much the same period. The English common law was soon enforced throughout Ireland, though in fact the courts took account of 'brehon law' where the circumstances seemed to require it. The traditional order of coarbs, brehons and bards which had survived in Ulster gradually collapsed. It was now possible for an Irish parliament to meet which could draw upon representatives of shires and boroughs from all over Ireland.

What then went wrong? Why should there have been a revolt in 1642 among the very pro-English elements which had acquiesced in the overthrow of Desmond and O Neill? The plantation of the territories of O Neill and O Donnell was not in itself a cause of unrest. The Catholic earl of Westmeath benefited from the plantation of Cavan. The greater landowners such as the Dillons accepted English titles. Such septs as the O Hurleys, O Briens and O Dwyers made the transition from Gaelic chieftain to landed aristocrat. Bishop O Hurley of Emly belonged to a family which had a record of loyalty to the Crown during the Nine Years War, and possessed an estate of 8,500 acres. Such landowners had a great deal to lose. The reasons for unrest may be sought in the list of grievances which was presented to the Crown in 1628 and is known as the 'Graces'. On the basis of this, it seems clear that the expectations aroused by the victory of the 'loyal' groupings had not been fulfilled. Economic power in both trade and land was overwhelmingly in the hands of the Catholic 'Old English' (using that term in the sense of 'loyalists', not in any 'racial' sense). Political and administrative influence, however, was passing into the hands of those new Protestant settlers who had arrived in Elizabeth's reign. Administrative devices such as the court of Wards and Liveries had introduced religious criteria as a condition for inheriting land. The plantation of Connacht, attempted during the 1630s by the lord deputy, was further evidence that the English administration intended to continue its policy of anglicisation of the 'Old English' interest. Religious conformity was to be the measure of loyalty, as the full implications of the English Reformation began to work themselves out in Ireland.

In Ulster there was also another source of discontent which arose from the plantation of the lands of O Neill and O Donnell after the Flight

of the Earls in 1607. In Ulster, as in Desmond, the aim of Crown policy in the sixteenth century had been to create a class of landlords and tenants holding their estates under the common law. The decision to replace this policy with one of colonisation was to have momentous consequences, especially as the best land was reserved for Scots and English colonists. The rising which took place in 1641, at a moment when the English monarchy faced a severe political crisis in both Scotland and England, was almost inevitable. It was accompanied by widespread killing, though the figure of 200,000 victims was totally inaccurate. The myth of '1641', however, was accepted in England and formed the rationale for the punitive actions which followed under Cromwell in the next decade.

In Ulster, during the 1640s, Old Irish and Presbyterian Scots were engaged in almost continual warfare in which neither gained the upper hand. Elsewhere, in the provinces of Leinster and Connacht and parts of Munster, the 'Old English' party erected a polity which provided a glimpse of one possible future for Ireland. An English-style parliament was set up at Kilkenny, though the term 'Confederation' was used for political reasons. In their statement of aims the Confederates looked back to the 'Great Charter' and declared that the common law 'shall be observed throughout the whole kingdom'. Penal statutes against the 'Roman Catholic religion' were alone exempted from this statement of principle.

There was no more striking monument to the success of the policies of 'surrender and regrant' than the Confederation of Kilkenny. The Confederates had risen in the name of the king and were willing to provide him with military aid provided that their political and religious aims were met. Among these, an independent parliament free of Poynings' Law and the public practice of their religion loomed largest. Negotiations with the king, however, were made difficult by the problems of Ulster, by the failure of the king to promise more than a bare tolerance for the Catholics and, in 1645, by the refusal of the papal nuncio Archbishop Rinuccini to compromise with a heretic monarchy. When agreement was arrived at in 1646 (the first Ormond Peace) it was condemned by Rinuccini and the 'Old Irish' of Ulster. A second agreement (the second Ormond Peace) signed in 1649 proved to be merely the prelude to the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland.

During the confederate period, the divisions between north and south, a feature of Irish history in the later middle ages, once more re-emerged, accentuated now by the plantation of Ulster. Even within the Catholic episcopate there was a marked difference of attitude between the Old English bishops, with social backgrounds in the urban patriciate or the landed aristocracy, and those from Ulster, belonging to the Gaelic

nobility, whose families had been dispossessed. Ulster had its own set of problems deriving from the large-scale settlement of Scots in Down, Antrim and Derry. These long-standing differences of *mentalité* survived amid the anguish of defeat, and exile, when one side sought to blame the other for the catastrophe. The historical controversy between the 'Old Irish' Richard O Ferrall and the 'Old English' John Lynch reflected this clash of attitude. Exiled members of the bardic order also took up the same themes.

The Cromwellian conquest brought about the downfall of the 'Old English' interest in Ireland. The real beneficiaries of the conquest, however, were not the Cromwellian soldiers but the 'New English' planters of the pre-1641 period who now styled themselves 'Old Protestants' to distinguish themselves from the Baptists and Quakers ('New Protestants') of the Cromwellian army. It has been estimated that of the 36,000 soldiers who stood to benefit from the original plantation, only 8,000 remained twenty years later. The Protestant ascendancy was very much an 'Old Protestant' ascendancy. The Cromwellian settlement also left intact the hold which the Ulster Scots enjoyed in Down and Antrim.

It had originally been planned to transport all Catholics west of the Shannon. Eventually only landlords suffered this fate, the actual occupiers of the soil being retained in the east as an indispensable labour force. The Catholic urban patriciate also were displaced from the towns, which henceforth became centres of the new colonial regime. From the economic point of view, the effects were catastrophic. Of Galway it was said in 1655, 'her merchants were princes among the nations but now the city which was full of people is solitary and very desolate'. The Cromwellian plantation thus did not have the consequences which its exponents hoped for. In the absence of large-scale colonisation from England, neither the extermination nor the conversion of the Irish took place.

As in England, so in Ireland, the mid-seventeenth century marked the peak of Reformation fervour. After the Restoration the Protestant interest was placed on the defensive and even forced into full retreat during the crisis of 1688–9. The victory of William III at the Boyne in 1690 decided the future of Ireland for the next two centuries on the basis of a Protestant landowning ascendancy.

For much of the period that we have been considering, the aim of successive governments was to develop unity within different parts of the English empire on the basis of religious conformity. When the political and religious map of the British Isles was stabilised in 1690 religious unity had not in fact been achieved. In England bitter hostility existed between the Established Church and the dissenting sects, each of which had its own version of the events of the civil war. In Scotland Presbyterians of various persuasions contended for control of the Established Church and

were often united only in their hatred of episcopalianism and Popery. In Ireland, the population was divided into 'Protestants' (sc. members of the Established Church), Catholics and Presbyterians. In Wales the Established Church confronted the dissenters. What seems to have occurred during these two centuries was that for many the sense of belonging to a particular Church replaced an earlier cultural identity. The divisiveness of the feudal period gave way to a new form of divisiveness based on religion.

Postscript

In this chapter I placed considerable emphasis upon the concept of an 'English empire' with its base in London and the south-east. So far as Ireland is concerned, such an imperial model provides a convincing framework for further analysis, and in fact in recent decades has been at the 'cutting edge' of Irish history. Professor Nicholas Canny, in his master work *Making Ireland British* (Oxford, 2000), has shown how, from Spenser onwards to Strafford and Cromwell, 'plantation' (sc. colonisation) was seen as a favoured solution to the Irish problem. Edmund Spenser's *View of the Present State of Ireland* (1633), though written earlier, and Sir John Davies, *Discovery of the True Causes why Ireland was never subdued* (1612) take their places as key treatises which were to be joined in due course by Sir John Temple's highly emotional pamphlet, *The Irish Rebellion* (1646). The imperial dimension to Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* with its implications for Ireland is now generally accepted as a central focus for discussion (see, for example, the introduction and bibliographical discussion in A. Hadfield and W. Maley, eds., *Edward Spenser: A View of the Present State of Ireland* (Oxford, 1997), pp. xii–xiv, 177–89).

The English historian Victor Treadwell, in his substantial study *Buckingham and Ireland 1616–1628* (Dublin, 1998), has shown how Ireland was treated as a colony to be exploited at will by royal favourites. The literary critic Philip Edwards, in his *Threshold of a Nation: A Study of English and Irish Drama* (Cambridge, 1979), quoted a description of Sir Humphrey Gilbert's 'colonising' methods in Elizabethan Ireland. It was his practice, says Thomas Churchyard, a contemporary commentator,

That the heads of all those . . . which were killed in the day should be cut off from their bodies and brought to the place where he encamped at night, and should be laid on the ground by each side of the way leading into his own tent so that none could come into his tent for any cause but commonly he must pass through a lane of heads, which he used *ad terrorem*, the dead feeling nothing more the pains thereby; and yet did it bring great terror to the people when they saw the heads of their dead fathers, brothers, children, kinsfolk, and friends lie on the ground before their faces, as they came to speak with the said colonel.

Not surprisingly, imperial policies led to violent reaction and in due course to rebellion in the name of an Irish nation. In recent years Hiram Morgan and others have drawn attention to the importance of Hugh O Neill (d.1616) (see Morgan H. Tyrone's *Rebellion: The Outbreak of the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland* (London, 1993)). But Ireland still remained very much divided between Old English and Old Irish traditions, the old English looking back to Magna Carta, the old Irish to the Sons of Míl, the Irish equivalent of the Arthur legend. Geoffrey Keating, a priest of old English background, wrote a history in Irish c. 1634 in which he attempted to create a tradition which could be shared by old English and Irish alike. Bernadette Cunningham, in *The World of Geoffrey Keating: History, Myth and Religion in Seventeenth Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2000), has now provided us with a fascinating account of this historian whose work helped to create a sense of Catholic Irish national identity. Two other books may also be mentioned as making significant historiographical advances in this field: Jane H. Ohlmeyer, *Civil War and Restoration in the Three Stuart Kingdoms: The Career of Randall MacDonnell, Marquis of Antrim 1609–1683* (Cambridge, 1993), unusual in its emphasis on the 'Three Kingdoms', and Tadgh O Annracháin, *Catholic Reformation in Ireland: The Mission of Rinuccini (1645–1649)* (Oxford, 2002), the first substantial study of a figure who perhaps inadvertently exercised decisive influence upon the course of events in the 'Three Kingdoms'. In many ways, however, the most striking contribution to debate has been that of Professor Steven Ellis in his article 'The Collapse of the Gaelic World, 1450–1650' (*Irish Historical Studies*, no.124 (November, 1999), pp. 449–69). Here he argues that Henry VIII's adoption of the title 'King' of Ireland came eventually to undermine the idea of trans-Gaelic polity (Gaedhaltacht) linking the Gaelic speakers of western Scotland and of the island of Ireland. In due course the ambitions of the kings of Scotland to extend their power in the west worked towards the same result. Finally, the Reformation made headway in the west of Scotland creating a crucial difference between Scottish and Irish Gaels. Professor Ellis' article has the merit in my view of making us question the inevitability of a Three Kingdom or 'Four Nation' framework. It deserves to be more widely known.

   Scottish scholars have also made significant contributions. Thanks to the work of Roger Mason and others we are now far more aware of the Scottish dimension to the British Isles story. We now see much more clearly the importance of the 'invention of tradition' which took place in the fourteenth century providing Scotland with a monarchy which stretched back to 330 BC and ultimately to the marriage of a certain princess Scota who gave her name to Scotland. This myth, preposterous to modern eyes, was no more so than the English equivalent tracing the

name Britain to a certain Brutus whose links were with Troy and to the Emperor Constantine who was supposedly born in Britain. In the sixteenth century the main outlines of the Scottish version were put forward in print by two considerable scholars, Hector Boéce (c.1465–1536) in his *History of the Scots* (1527) and George Buchanan (1506–82) in his *History of Scottish Affairs* (1582), both books written in Latin. There was thus a long-standing resistance in Scotland to the idea of an English empire.

The Henrician Reformation, however, brought about crucial changes and for some time at least was able to provide the English monarchy with a gloss of religious reform for its long-term ambitions. One striking example of this was during the campaign known as the 'Rough Wooing' of 1544–50 during which the English general Somerset won a substantial victory in 1547 at Pinkie. As Marcus Merriman (Mason, 1994) has shown, it was during this period that the term 'Great Britain' entered the political vocabulary as part of a policy which it was hoped would lead to a marriage between Edward VI and Mary, Queen of Scots. Merriman draws attention to the role of Somerset's propagandist James Henrisoun who had no hesitation in developing his defence of English policy upon the fact that Brutus 'conquered all this lande' (Mason, 1994, p. 90). He also argued on official Henrician lines that the Emperor Constantine provided a historical basis for the union of two nations based on 'common ethnic blood' proving 'that as Britayn was under one Emperor then was Scotland and England but one empire' (*ibid.* p. 92). Henrisoun also spoke as a committed advocate of Reformation.

For how Godly were it that as these two Realms should grow into one, so should thei also agre in the concorde and centre in one religion of Christ, setting a part all fonde superstitions, sophisticacioun and other thousands of devileries brought in by the bishop of Rome and his creatures.

Somerset's plans for Scotland ended in failure and it was not until Elizabeth's reign that the English were again given the opportunity to intervene, when in 1560 troops were sent to aid the Lords of the Congregation in a move which led to the withdrawal of the French from Scotland. In a fine article 'Two Kingdoms or Three: Ireland in Anglo-Scottish Relations in the Middle of the Sixteenth Century' (Mason, 1987) Jane Dawson has shown how Cecil developed a strategy which encompassed the whole of the British Isles. The key fact which she highlights is the way in which Cecil planned to use the earl of Argyll's influence in 'the north parties of Ireland' to control the O Neills and MacDonnells and the O Donnells. But the main thrust of English policy in later decades was to bring about a union of crowns, an objective which was finally achieved in 1603.

Political victory did not come without a price. James VI held strong views about Anglo-Scottish Union. In his very first speech to parliament he compared closer union to the consolidation of the seven Kingdoms under Wessex or the merger of French duchies 'one after another conquered by the sword'. Hitherto it had been England which had the upper hand in influencing events in Scotland. Now James' spokesmen Sir John Hayward, Sir Thomas Craig and Edward Ayscu criticised the idea of an ancient English constitution (Greenberg, 2002, p. 126). It seems to have been resistance to what they saw as Scottish innovation that led lawyers such as Sir Edward Coke to defend repeatedly the idea of the ancient English constitution.

In this way Arthur once more returned to prominence. For example, on the basis of a supposedly reliable source *The Mirror of Justice,* Coke believed that Arthur held parliaments (Greenberg, p. 144). Thus English lawyers provided a mythical basis for English identity which paralleled that of Hector Boéce and George Buchanan in Scotland. It was a mythology which lasted well into the seventeenth century and in the case of the mythical Christian king Lucius into the nineteenth.

The history of the Three Kingdoms may thus be seen as a history of contending national mythologies. In the case of England, Janelle Greenberg has shown convincingly how the myth of the ancient constitution was a key strand in the ideology of parliamentary opposition. In Scotland, as Roger Mason and others have indicated, there was also an 'ancient constitution' which was seen as a buttress of Scottish claims to independence. In Ireland, Geoffrey Keating in his *Foras Feasa ar Eireann* (The Fountain of Knowledge about Ireland) traced the ancient Irish constitution to the High Kingship of Tara, complete with its own parliament. As both English and Scottish historians had done, Keating traced Irish origins to pre-Christian times, in the Irish case the arrival of the Sons of Míl. Keating's version of history came to be seen as having the great merit of including all groups within a wider inclusive Irish history. The Stuart kings could also be seen as descendants of the Sons of Míl, a fact which helps to explain the continuing involvement of the Irish in Jacobitism well into the eighteenth century.

There were also three (or more) contending religious mythologies. The first, that backed by the English Crown, was that which looked back to the Emperor Constantine as the model for a reformed monarch. It was a view of the Church of England which stressed the role of bishops appointed by the Crown. James VI had adopted this view before becoming King of England, and after 1603 he continued to defend it in the strongest terms ('No Bishop, No King'). Against this view such figures as Andrew Melville and George Buchanan advocated an elective system of Church

government and an elective monarchy which could trace its origins back to the earliest times. James I dealt with Scotland successfully. His son Charles I failed to do so and, during the 1640s Scottish problems, formed part of an intricate political-religious pattern which led to civil war, and indirectly to the execution of the king. The third mythology was that which took root in Ireland where the papal nuncio Archbishop Rinuccini became the spokesman for a resurgent Catholicism in the late 1640s.

An earlier generation of historians dealt with these charges under the general rubric of 'the English Revolution'. Today, following the lead of Jenny Wormald and Conrad Russell, we are more likely to see them as the problems faced by a 'multiple Kingdom' comparable to those confronted by the Spanish monarchy in Catalonia and Portugal. By the end of the century after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the Battle of the Boyne the dominance of the English component of this multiple Kingdom was assured, or seemed to be.

The English colonies in colonial America including the West Indies were also thus very much part of the English success story. It was a position of power which relied upon commercial success, which economic historians explained as largely due to 're-export trade' in certain enumerated commodities such as sugar and tobacco. Until recently the role of the slave trade in the rise of such Atlantic ports as Bristol and Liverpool was ignored. In fact in the first edition of this book, for example, I myself did not mention the slave trade. In recent years, however, the balance has shifted. Historians can now turn to such works as David Ellis' *Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, 2000) for a comparative critical treatment of the British role in the slave trade during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

8   The remaking of an empire

In orthodox interpretations of English history, the revolution of 1688 occupies a special place, as a landmark in the history of English liberty, when the victory of Protestantism and progress was assured by the flight of James II and the peaceful accession of William of Orange and Mary, James II's daughter. In the wake of revolution came a Toleration Act allowing dissenters to erect their own places of worship. Though it was not clear at the time, divine right monarchy had given way to parliamentary sovereignty. In due course, the revolution acquired its permanent appellation of 'Glorious'.

In the context of the British Isles, however, the Glorious Revolution takes on a more complex colouring. It was, in the first place, by no means bloodless, nor was its success inevitable. The future of the revolution in Scotland was still in doubt after the battle of Killiecrankie (1689) which was won by James II's supporters, though the effect of the victory was destroyed by the death of their leader, Claverhouse. In 1715 the revolution, though buttressed now by the Act of Union (1707), was challenged again when the Old Pretender, James VIII, landed in Scotland. Not until after the battle of Culloden (1746) can it be said that the regime set up in 1689 was secure. In Ireland, the fate of the Stuart cause was unclear until after the battle of the Boyne in July 1690 and perhaps not until the surrender of Limerick to Williamite forces a year later. Within the British Isles, the result of William's victory was not toleration but the establishment of an episcopalian ascendancy in Ireland, and a Presbyterian equivalent in Scotland. In Ireland, Catholics and Presbyterians found themselves under episcopalian dominance. In Scotland, Catholics and episcopalians were placed under the control of a Presbyterian establishment.

In England and Wales, the toleration which was extended to dissent was very much a limited one. Religious tests imposed by the Corporation Act (1662) and the Test Act (1673) still remained in force, their object being to prevent dissenters exercising political influence at the local as well as the national level, and various attempts made to repeal them in the eighteenth century failed. Toleration remained confined to religious

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observance. Outside this narrow range, the legacy of the civil wars of the mid-seventeenth century led to the perpetuation of distrust and hostility between the two cultures of Church and dissent, each with their own interpretation of the recent past, the churchmen looking back to the executions of Charles I and of Archbishop Laud, and the dissenters to their ejection from the Established Church after the Restoration. As Dr Jonathan Clark has emphasised (in *English Society 1688–1832* (1985)), an Anglican ascendancy retained control of the institutions of power and influence long after 1688. Episcopalian culture was dominant in the universities, the major public schools and the army and navy as well as in the Church itself. Dissenting culture was forced to create its own institutions of higher education, the dissenting academies in London and the north and west, where they had some numerical strength.

In Scotland, a similar clash of cultures took place though here it was the episcopalians who found themselves in a subordinate position. The Covenanters, now in a position of power, abolished episcopacy as an institution in the Established Church. In the Highlands, the renewed influence of the Campbells, which had been in decline since the Restoration, was signalled by the massacre of the Catholic MacDonalds of Glencoe in 1692. During the first half of the eighteenth century, Jacobitism, drawing support from bitter feelings of discrimination, remained far more of a threat than the Whig historians implied. But the dominant culture, reinforced by the Act of Union of 1707 and enshrined in the power of the Kirk, in the universities and the schools, remained Lowland Presbyterianism. This is not to say that it was united. Throughout the eighteenth century, Covenanting sects broke away from the Establishment because it was not godly enough for their taste. In their hatred of Popery and of such historical figures as Claverhouse, however, Presbyterians of all views were at one.

In Ireland, defeat at the Boyne in 1690 marked the final eclipse of the culture of the 'Old English'. James II's general, Richard Talbot, earl of Tyrconnell, took his title from the O Donnells, chiefs of Tir Connail, but his roots lay in the anglicised counties of the Pale. The same may be said of the defender of Limerick, Patrick Sarsfield, whose estate was at Lucan, near Dublin. The Cromwellian confiscations had dealt the Old English a severe blow, from which they had made a partial recovery after the Restoration. The Williamite confiscations, however, together with the penal laws passed under William III and Anne, applied the *coup de grâce*. Henceforth members of Catholic gentry families sought careers as 'Wild Geese' in the armies of France and Spain. The dominant culture of eighteenth-century Ireland was to be that of the 'Protestant' (sc. episcopalian) ascendancy. Dublin, Cork and Limerick became largely Protestant urban centres, round which the great houses of the new elite
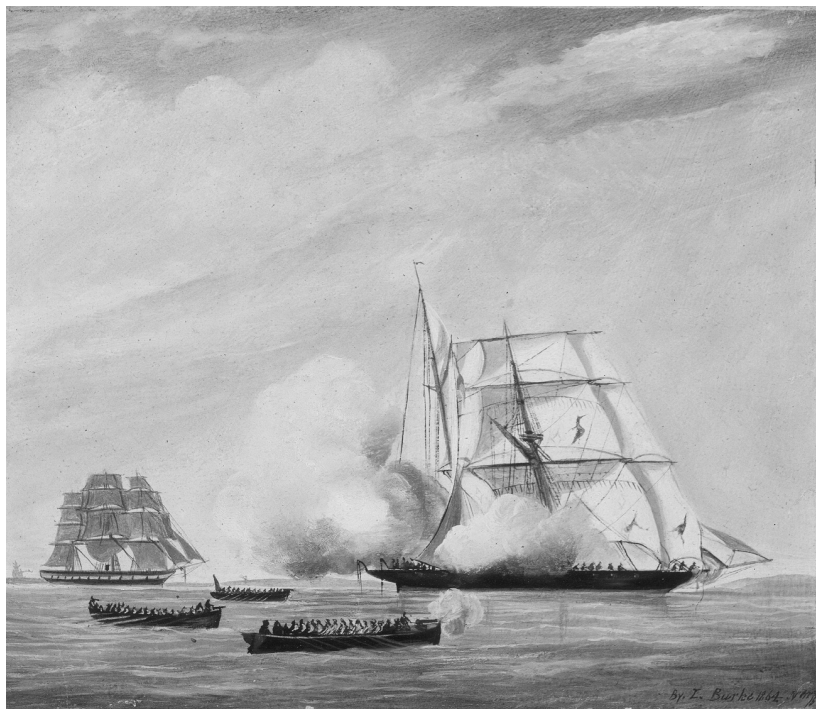
Figure 26. *Slave ship*
This image of a Liverpool-based slave ship is a reminder of the impor-
tance of the slave trade in the economy of eighteenth-century Britain.
The transport of slaves from west Africa to the West Indies and the
American colonies formed a key element in a triangular pattern of trade
which led to the rise of Liverpool and Bristol. It was only in the late
twentieth century, however, that historians began to study the wider
implications of the slave trade for British history.

were soon to be clustered. In the north-east, Presbyterians, linked closely
with Scotland, formed a powerful bloc, though excluded from their full
say in political and social life. It was here during the 1790s that the United
Irishmen attracted many recruits for a movement which moved towards
republicanism, under the influence of the United States as well as France.
Among the Catholics, the bitter divisions between Gaelic and Old English
cultures, deriving from the outcome of the confederate wars of the mid-
seventeenth century, gave way ultimately to a sense of a common Catholi-
cism, which accepted, however unwillingly, a subordinate position in the
polity of Ireland.

Our attention cannot be confined solely to the British Isles, however.
One of the most remarkable changes which occurred within the English

empire during the period after 1688 was the growth of the American colonies. The population of the thirteen mainland colonies grew from c. 250,000 in 1700 to c. 2,500,000 by the 1770s. Trade with the colonies became a new and important feature of the economies of the British Isles. The prosperity of London was in large measure built upon it. The rise of Liverpool and Bristol in the course of the eighteenth century was bound up with colonial trade, including the slave trade. Ireland, though excluded from full participation in the English mercantile system, enjoyed a burgeoning trade with the slave-based societies of the West Indies, which provided a market for Irish salt beef and linens. In Scotland, the rapid growth of the port of Glasgow was connected with the tobacco trade.

Economically, the American colonies were an integral and increasingly important part of the English empire; culturally, also they cannot be left out of account in assessing the relative balance of Church and dissent. The various cultures of dissent were much more strongly represented within the thirteen colonies than was the case in England. In New England, Puritanism formed the basis of the dominant culture though now in more variegated forms than those held by the founding fathers of the early seventeenth century. In the middle colonies of Pennsylvania and New York, which expanded more rapidly during the eighteenth century than the colonies to the north and south, the emigration of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians from Ulster reinforced non-Anglican elements. Throughout the colonies, the impact of various evangelical movements, known collectively as the 'Great Awakening', found a ready response among those opposed to a religious establishment. Taking the English empire as a whole the rise of dissent in the colonies during this period led to a shift in the balance of the cultures of Church and dissent. In England itself there was no doubt about the dominance of the Anglican establishment, but beyond England dissenters could look westward across the Atlantic for moral reinforcement in time of crisis. From this point of view, the American revolution of the 1770s takes shape as a renewal of the seventeenth-century conflict between the two cultures of Church and dissent.

As suggested above, England during the eighteenth century was a society deeply divided on religious grounds. The divisions created by the civil war were still far from healed and the unity created by the fear of James II's Catholicism proved to be only temporary. During Anne's reign successful attempts were made by the High Church interest to reduce the role of dissent in public life. The Occasional Conformity Act (1711) was intended to prevent dissenters from complying with the letter of the law by taking the Anglican sacrament once a year in order to qualify for office. By the terms of the Schism Act (1714) dissenters were to be deprived of their schools and academies. The fact that these two acts were repealed

after the accession of the Hanoverians cannot conceal the fact that the rift between the two cultures of Church and dissent remained deep for many decades to come. The dissenting deputies, drawn from each Presbyterian, Independent and Baptist congregation within ten miles of London, reported regularly upon the pressures of various kinds to which the dissenters were exposed. In 1743 attacks by a riotous mob in Anglesey attracted their attention; in 1748 the refusal of burial to children of dissenters in a Suffolk village; in 1767 the exaction of tolls upon chapel-goers using a turnpike road. Perhaps the main factor tending to keep these tensions under control during the first half of the century was the fear of the return of Popery in the person of the Pretender.

The mutual animosity which existed between churchmen and dissenters derived in large measure from doctrinal and political differences and from rival interpretations of the recent past. Cultural differences of a less intellectual kind also played their part. The dominant Anglican culture embodied attitudes towards leisure which were criticised in dissenting circles. Racing, gambling, theatre-going, card-playing, dancing were all activities tolerated and often encouraged within the dominant culture. At a popular level, the village alehouse was the secular counterpart of the parish church.

The growth of a consumer society provides an indication of the strength of the dominant culture. It was 'at church' that a commentator noted how:

in a populous city in the north, the macebearer cleared the way for Mrs Mayoress who came sidling after him in an enormous fan hoop of a pattern that had never been seen in those parts. At another church [he] saw several negligees with furbelowed aprons . . . but these were woefully eclipsed by a burgess' daughter just come from London who appeared in a Trolloppee of Slammerkin with treble ruffles to the cuffs, pinked and gymped and the sides of the petticoats drawn up on festoons.

Such fashions were unlikely to be seen in dissenting chapels.

In the face of this Anglican ascendancy, dissenters, at least until the 1760s, were on the defensive. In dissenting circles, it was commonly held that 'going to horse races, cricketing and playing at cards etc is not to be practised and in no ways allowed by the professors of the Gospel'. 'Fiddling and vanity and singing vain songs' were also discouraged. There were also some who regarded Christmas and other feasts as pagan feasts, 'dung . . . received from Baal' in the words of the sixteenth-century reformer Robert Browne. As some compensation, there developed the practice of communal hymn-singing which was uncommon outside chapel culture until the nineteenth century.

Excluded from the universities, the dissenters sought to preserve their cultural identity by establishing academies. The attitudes of some

churchmen towards these institutions were represented in the dedication to Clarendon's *History* (first published during the reign of Anne). 'What can be the meaning of these several seminaries, and, as it were, universities, set up in divers parts of the kingdom by more than ordinary industry, contrary to law, supported by large contributions, where the youth is bred up in principles directly contrary to monarchical and episcopal government?' What it meant in fact is suggested by a remark made later in the century about the teaching of history. 'Eachard, Hume, Smollett and others of their turn, write their histories upon the principle of tyranny for the use of kings . . . Wilson, Osborne, Coke, Rapin, Mrs Macaulay, Harris etc write for the use of the people.' Joseph Priestley who was educated at Daventry Academy and who taught at Warrington Academy declared that, 'while your universities resemble ponds of stagnant water, secured by dams and mounds and offensive to the neighbourhood, ours are like rivers which taking their natural course fertilise a whole country'.

To analyse English society in terms of two cultures is clearly an oversimplification, however. Within the dominant Church culture itself, there were the two major traditions of High Church and Low Church, the latter being more sympathetic to the dissenters. Within dissent, there were marked differences between Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists and Unitarians. The position was further complicated by the rise of the evangelical movement of Methodism within the Church of England. Methodism was a missionary movement within the Church but in many ways it owed its inspiration to the world of dissent. John Wesley ordered his followers

to taste no spirituous liquors, no dram of any kind unless provoked by a physician . . . to pawn nothing, no not to save life, to wear no needless ornaments, such as rings, ear-rings, to use no needless self-indulgence, such as taking snuff or tobacco unless prescribed by a physician . . . To give alms . . . To be patterns of diligence and frugality, or self denial and taking up the cross daily.

Their critics indeed looked upon the Methodists as crypto-dissenters whose aim was to subvert the Church from within. Attacks made upon Methodist meetings by church mobs bear witness to the enduring tensions between Church and dissent during this period.

The dominance of the establishment was in many ways reinforced by what was the most remarkable example of social change in eighteenth-century England – the continued growth of London. London was already a metropolis in the seventeenth century. During the eighteenth, however, its dominance became even greater. Daniel Defoe noted in his *Tour of England* that few areas were unaffected by the pull of the London market. The population of London rose from 350,000 in 1,700 to nearly one

million at the end of the century. This market also influenced the economies of the Scottish Lowlands, the Welsh border counties and the counties of eastern Ireland. London also became the centre of a rapidly growing re-export trade, most notably in sugar and tobacco, two of the 'enumerated commodities' which by the terms of the Navigation Acts could not be exported directly from the colonies to Europe. Trade brought in its wake a demand for warehouses, docks and ancillary labour, as well as for credit facilities and insurance services supplied by the 'City'. As mentioned earlier, the slave trade also played a key role in the rise of Bristol and Liverpool.

London, already an administrative, political and legal centre and now a commercial entrepôt on the grand scale, also became a centre of consumption. Shops, theatres, clubs, coffee houses, drinking houses all came to provide facilities for enjoyment. Dissent may well have been over-represented in circles of trade and finance, though this often-made assumption is by no means beyond challenge, but the values of the city as represented by its architecture and day-to-day activities were an urban extension of a broad-based 'Church' culture. Over much of the metropolitan area the tone was set by the town-houses of the aristocracy in the newly built squares near to the palace of St James. It was this life-style which the dissenter Richard Price presumably had in mind in denouncing 'an abandoned venality, the inseparable companion of dissipation and extravagance [which] has poisoned the springs of public virtue among us'.

During the reigns of George I and George II (1714–60), the balance between Church and dissent was held by the Whig administrations of Sir Robert Walpole and his successor, Henry Pelham, relying upon a system of political 'influence' which their opponents denounced as 'corruption'. Several factors made possible this long-term success of the Whigs in the face of what may well have been a Tory majority in the country as a whole. The 'Low Church' Anglican episcopate, appointed under government patronage, could be relied upon to support the government in the House of Lords (at the local parish level, where the parsons were generally Tory, the situation was very different). The long period of war, or fear of war, from 1688 to 1815, sometimes termed the 'Second Hundred Years War', led to the growth of a patronage system linked to wartime requirements. The army and the navy were a source of useful government patronage. Government influence could be brought to bear upon dockyard towns such as Chatham, Gravesend, Deptford and Greenwich. The Whigs were also able to control many small boroughs in the south-west. Dissenters tolerated a government which was much better from their point of view than a possible Tory alternative with High Church affiliations. In counties such as Cheshire and Lancashire in the north-west

and in Hertfordshire, Gloucestershire and Essex in the south, where dissenters accounted for one-fifth of the electorate, this support could be an important consideration.

In the 1760s this 'Age of Equipoise' came to an end. The accession of George III in 1760 brought his adviser John Stuart, third earl of Bute, to a position of great influence. In 1762 the duke of Newcastle resigned and the long period of Whig ascendancy came to an end. The change was widely interpreted by its critics as a shift to Tory-style government and Bute's policies came under attack on these grounds. For reasons which are still unclear, John Wilkes, a relatively obscure politician, became a symbol of popular discontent in London and in some provincial towns. The arrest of Wilkes for publishing a seditious libel in no. 45 of *The North Briton* was the first in a series of events which led to repeated challenges of the government. He was four times elected as MP for Middlesex from 1768 onwards, each election being followed by a government-inspired annulment. In 1768, after the first election, several people had been shot by Scottish troops at a meeting of Wilkesite supporters, an event known as the 'St George's Fields' Massacre'. Not surprisingly anti-Scottish sentiment came to form part of radical propaganda. Finally in 1774 Wilkes took his seat as MP for Middlesex where he remained until 1790. By then, Wilkesite agitation had become a symbol linking political opposition in Britain and America.

The events of the 1760s and 1770s, culminating in the war of 1775–83, are generally conceptualised in terms of the 'American revolution'. It makes equally good historical sense to see them in terms of a civil war between the cultures of Church and dissent and recalling in some of its particulars the first civil war of the 1640s. To some observers, the attitudes of the Americans appeared to be a modern example of 'the principles of the Independents in Oliver's time'. In the 1770s, as in the 1640s, 'No Popery' became a stick with which to beat the government. To some, the Quebec Act of 1774, granting toleration to French Canada, was part of a general conspiracy to plant 'Popery and arbitrary power in America'. It was said that 'the Inquisition may erect her standard in Pennsylvania and the city of Philadelphia may yet experience the carnage of a St Bartholomew's day'. In England a certain Mr Hudson told a pro-government candidate that he would not vote 'for any Popery in Canada and shutting up the port of Boston'. An observer less sympathetic to the American cause commented that

if this rebellion in America proves successful, it will be in consequence of republican principles of the most levelling kind; and the victors will no doubt aim, with the assistance of their restless friends in England, to overturn that happy limited monarchy, which experience has taught us is best suited to a realm so extensive as ours, and which has long been the glory of Britain and the envy of all the world.

The conflict which developed between the British government and the American colonies after the end of the Seven Years War arose for many different reasons, economic, political, constitutional. It may also be seen as arising from a profound disharmony between the rival cultures of Church and dissent. In the mother country, the Established Church provided the basis of a dominant culture with deference built into the fabric of society. Dissent, with its less deferential traditions resting upon the notion of a 'godly elect', had been, since the defeat of the seventeenth century, a subordinate culture. In the mainland colonies of North America, however, the balance of cultures during the course of the eighteenth century shifted in favour of dissent. In New England dissent in its various forms was a dominant culture. In the middle states of New York and Pennsylvania, both of which expanded more rapidly than the colonies of New England and the south, large-scale immigration of Scotch-Irish and of German Lutherans tilted the balance away from Anglicanism. According to one episcopalian, 'Africa never more abounded with new Monsters than Pennsylvania with new sects who are constantly sending out their Emissaries around.' It was said later of the Scotch-Irish (with some exaggeration) that 'with a very few exceptions, they are United Irishmen, Free Masons and the most God-provoking Democrats this side of Hell'. In Pennsylvania, in 1768, Scotch-Irish led the violent Paxton Boys movement against the Anglican-Quaker dominance of Philadelphia. In North Carolina, resentment arose from the fact that Presbyterian marriages were invalid, a situation not remedied until 1766. The impact of the religious revival known as the 'Great Awakening' also helped to swell the ranks of the evangelicals. In Virginia the culture of the Anglican gentry, revolving around race meetings and other 'festive' occasions, found itself on the defensive.

The crisis within the English empire lasted from 1763 when the government attempted to raise money from the colonies by means of the Stamp Act (1765) to the recognition of American independence in 1783. A series of British defeats from Saratoga in 1777 to Yorktown in 1781 led to what must have seemed inconceivable at the end of the Seven Years War, overwhelming defeat for the mother country at the hands of an alliance between the mainland colonies and the 'Popish monarchy' of France. Only Canada and the West Indies remained of a transatlantic empire which had first come into existence nearly two centuries earlier.

The political and cultural consequences of the rift between Britain and her former colonies were profound. The United States eventually became a society without formal religious establishments, as Anglican loyalists moved north to Canada or back to Britain. The result was to give the cultures of dissent full play. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the new state were drawn up by men strongly

influenced by the values and traditions of 'civic humanism' deriving from Machiavelli and Harrington. There can be little doubt, however, that the Reformation was a more powerful influence upon the future of the infant United States than either the Renaissance or the Enlightenment. The 'Great Awakening' set the tone for much that was to come. As Jonathan Edwards declared half a century earlier,

It is not unlikely that this work of God's Spirit the awakening so extraordinary and wonderful is the dawning, or at least the prelude of that glorious work of God so often foretold in the Scripture, which, in the progress and issue of it, shall renew the world of mankind . . . We cannot reasonably think otherwise than that the beginning of this great work of God must be near. And there are many things that make it probable that this work will begin in America.

This was a note that was to be repeated throughout the nineteenth century and which derived unmistakeably from the culture of dissent.

Though some individual states retained an established church (e.g. Massachusetts) there was no national establishment. The sect was the characteristic form of religious organisation and it was this which provided the basis of what Tocqueville later analysed in his *Democracy in America*. In its lack of deference, in the absence of a formal hierarchical structure in Church and State, in its egalitarian emphasis, the United States developed along lines which derived from the dissenting tradition. In the American view of history John Milton and Algernon Sidney enjoyed a place which they were denied in the established English interpretation. Not surprisingly Mrs Catherine Macaulay, critic of Hume's 'Tory' history of England, came to visit George Washington in the years after the revolution. The lack of an establishment in America, however, may well have led to a certain anti-intellectualism and scorn for high culture.

Henry James, looking back to the earlier years of the infant republic, was less enthusiastic than Jonathan Edwards when he commented:

No Sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church, no clergy, no army, no diplomatic service, no country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles, nor manors, nor old country houses, nor parsonages, nor thatched cottages, nor ivied ruins; no cathedrals, nor abbeys, nor little Norman churches; no great Universities nor public schools – no Oxford, nor Eton, nor Harrow; no literature, no novels, no museums, no pictures, no political society, no sporting class – no Epsom, nor Ascot.

It is worth noting how much James was here offering the viewpoint of the southern English 'core' culture.

In England itself the result of defeat in America was to weaken the culture of dissent and to intensify the defensive attitude of the establishment. In 1787 Pitt and North spoke out against the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts on the grounds that they were 'the corner stone of the

constitution which should have every preservation'. In 1790 the vote against repeal was larger than it had ever been. In 1794 Joseph Priestley left for America where he died ten years later. The United States as much as revolutionary France was a warning of the type of 'levelling' society which might take root in England. During the half century which followed the end of the American war, 'class' as a concept made its appearance and it may well have been during this period that the hardening of class lines and the growth of deference which foreign observers noted as being characteristic of English society made their appearance. The loss of America may thus help to explain why there was no English equivalent of the French Revolution.

In terms of size and population (c. 350,000) the position of Wales within the English empire may be compared, not unreasonably, to one of the mainland American colonies. In Wales, as in colonies like Virginia and Pennsylvania, there was a 'Great Awakening' of 'vital religion' and a conflict between the cultures of Church and dissent, which ended with the triumph of dissent. George Whitefield's Calvinistic Methodism made as great an impact in Wales as it did in America. Wales did not achieve political independence but in a sense the eventual victory of nonconformity provided a substantial measure of cultural and linguistic autonomy, though at too high a cost in the eyes of its opponents. Nonconformity became the religion of the majority in Wales as it did in the infant United States, where Thomas Jefferson said that two-thirds of the population were dissenters. Calvinistic Methodism was particularly strong in Welsh-speaking north Wales. Perhaps it was only by being allied with a popular movement of this kind that the language survived. The alternative was absorption within England as happened in Cornwall (where Cornish died out in the eighteenth century) and in the border counties of Shropshire, Herefordshire and Monmouth, which became heavily anglicised.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century no single culture enjoyed complete dominance in Wales. The squirearchy was Anglican, as were the bishops and parochial clergy, and there were pockets of dissent in the small English-speaking market towns of the borders and the south, but the culture of the rural Welsh-speaking majority was an amalgam of traditional 'festive' culture, varying from locality to locality. The bardic culture of the elite had been undermined after the Union (1536–42) with the coming of print and the growth of governmental pressures to use English, but at a popular level Welsh oral culture, divided by its local dialects, survived. Wakes, feasts and wassailing, and the practice of certain rites of popular religion, such as the use of charms and holy wells to ward off evil spirits, flourished in the Welsh countryside as they did in Ireland and the Scottish Highlands.

During the course of the century, the situation was transformed, thanks largely to the zeal of churchmen working within the establishment. Missionary activity came from within the Anglican Church, often with the direct support of English clergy. The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, founded in 1699, took Wales as one of its targets and sponsored the foundation of a number of English-speaking charity schools, most of them in south Wales. The real turning point came, however, when Griffiths Jones, an Anglican parson at Llandowror, turned his attention to Welsh-speaking areas. Jones set up a system of scriptural education, in Welsh where it seemed appropriate, using itinerant (sc. 'circulating') teachers who taught Bible-reading to rural labourers during quiet months of the agricultural year. Hundreds of these schools introduced a primitive form of literacy based upon the Old and New Testaments and the Book of Common Prayer to the rural world of Wales. At much the same time, from the 1730s onwards, an evangelical movement, comparable to the 'Great Awakening' in colonial America, led to the creation of 'Methodist' societies within the Established Church. The leader of the movement was Howell Harris, whose views like those of Jonathan Edwards in New England and George Whitefield were strongly Calvinist. Welsh Methodism thus took on a different colouring from that of English Methodism, which followed the Arminianism of John Wesley.

Much may be attributed to the charismatic gifts of the evangelists but more is needed to account for their long-term success in transforming the *mentalité* of rural Wales. In social terms it would seem that the Methodists managed to adapt for their own purposes some of the institutions of rural society. Methodist societies overcame the challenge of a dispersed rural setting as the formal parochial structure could not. The evangelists remained within the structure of the Established Church until a decisive break came in 1810–11 but, well before this, Methodist institutions were not truly part of the parochial structure. In the face of clerical hostility, the Methodists were often forced to build their own chapels, which became dissenting chapels after the final breach.

Throughout the eighteenth century tensions within the Welsh Church were as bitter as those between the Church and the Old Dissenting bodies. Churchmen complained that the Methodists asserted 'that they and none others are the elect and damn all others in order to terrify the illiterate into their faction. They assure them that their fathers and grandfathers are in hell; and that they see visible marks of damnation in the faces of such as will not become Methodists.' Others protested about 'itinerant preachers who alienated the affections of weak people still further from the Established Church . . . [maintaining] that our most excellent liturgy is a dead letter, a heap of Popish rubbish composed by devils'. To the more

orthodox churchmen the Methodists seemed to be crypto-dissenters bent upon seizing power for themselves. When the breach came, however, it was the Established Church which suffered the heavier blow. In both north and south Wales it became the Church of a minority, yielding precedence to the Calvinistic Methodists in the north and to the chapels of Old Dissent, most notably the Independents and the Baptists, in the south. The loss of the Methodists was the main cause of this shift, which was to have significant consequences when, thanks to industrialisation, Wales became more important than it had ever been before within the English empire.

Although the language of Calvinistic Methodism was Welsh, the values and attitudes of the movement resembled those of other evangelical movements in England and America. Indeed there was little that was distinctively Welsh in their Sabbatarianism and their dislike of secular amusements. Thus, when every allowance is made for the importance of the Welsh language during this period, the fact remains that Wales became subtly anglicised. Within the context of an English empire, Wales was in many ways a sub-culture, drawing its standards from the metropolis. It was reaction against this, to some, unpleasant truth which led to the rise of a Welsh Romantic movement, reviving an interest in things Welsh. Support was greatest among the London-based Welsh, themselves a symbol of the incorporation of Wales within a wider political context. The society of Cymmrodorion (still in existence) was founded in 1751. The most active individual was Edward Williams, known usually by his self-created bardic name of 'Iolo Morganwg'. 'Iolo' revived the holding of eisteddfoddau, not seen since the mid-sixteenth century. The first meeting was held on Primrose Hill, London, an indication that the movement drew its support from the ethnic enthusiasm of exiles. It was in London that the need to preserve a sense of Welshness seemed most acute, whereas in Wales itself local identities were still all-important. Edward Williams himself came from an English-speaking background and spent much time in England before returning to Glamorgan. 'Iolo' and his compatriots created a new Welsh past which ignored the complexities of an earlier 'British' past. In so doing they were providing a Welsh equivalent of similar cultural revivals in the Scottish Lowlands and in Ireland.

In the late eighteenth century, several Welsh sub-cultures may be discerned, each operating within a larger imperial context. The first was that of the ruling elite of episcopalian gentry, in whose hands parliamentary politics rested, together with the control of local administration. Within the Established Church a revival took place, with gentry backing, later drawing much inspiration from the ritualism of the Oxford

Movement. Overall, however, it was the two forms of dissent which came to exercise dominance. A broad distinction may be made between south Wales, commercialised (albeit with some industry), anglicised and cosmopolitan, and the north, heavily Welsh-speaking and rural. In the south, Anglicanism contended with a wide variety of dissenting sects which had roots going back to the civil war period and among which demands for political reform found a ready response. In the north, it was Calvinistic Methodism, still at this date within the Established Church, which took root among the rural population. Though both were 'Welsh', it is not too much to say that north and south were in essence different sub-cultures.

It was from the cosmopolitan south that Richard Price and Iolo Morganwg came. Both men were heavily involved in the radical politics of the day, especially the issues raised by the American and French revolutions. As freemasons, they were both sympathetic to the ideas of the Enlightenment. Pockets of similar radicalism existed further north but in general it was the south, exposed to the influence of Bristol, which was most sympathetic to opposition causes. Rural north Wales, by contrast, was a more localised culture in which traditional elements were still strong despite the activities of the Methodists. The contrast between the two areas was to increase even more from the end of the eighteenth century with the onset of industrialisation in south Wales.

The changes which took place in Wales during the eighteenth century made little impact upon the other societies of the British Isles. However, the rise of Wales as a factor in wider British politics during the nineteenth century, when Welshmen became involved in the fortunes of the Liberal party, is explicable only against the background of the eighteenth century.

In Ireland, the formative period of the Reformation ended with the population divided into three distinct cultures: the episcopalians of eastern Ireland; the Presbyterians of Ulster; and the Catholic majority to be found in all four provinces. Among the Catholics the reforms begun during the Counter-Reformation had not progressed very far. The survival of such popular rites of passage as the 'wake' suggests that in the west, particularly, traditional patterns still survived. In times of active persecution, informal religious gatherings such as the 'patron' (the festival of local saints) were one of the few means by which religious identity could be maintained.

The episcopalians, though probably the smallest in numbers, enjoyed the greatest political power at the local and national level, since most of the landowners belonged to the Established Church. The Presbyterians were socially dominant in Antrim and Down but not well represented elsewhere. The Catholics, largely deprived of leadership, had least influence of all. Each of these groups constituted its own self-contained world. The Presbyterians enjoyed close links with Scotland where issues involving the

Covenant and lay patronage loomed large in the early eighteenth century. Ideological divisions in Scotland inevitably came to influence the various branches of Presbyterianism in Ulster. Episcopalians in contrast were closely involved with affairs in England, as the career of Jonathan Swift suggests. Increasingly, however, the Protestant (episcopalian) ascendancy became a society with its own distinctive outlook. Trinity College, Dublin, for example, which had drawn its provosts from Oxford and Cambridge during the seventeenth century, appointed men from its own ranks in the eighteenth. There was, thirdly, the Catholic majority, whose leaders, though deprived of prospects at home, sought military, ecclesiastical or commercial careers on the continent. The outlook of most Irish-speaking Catholics, it is safe to say, was largely bounded by their locality. A letter written by a Cork landlord in 1702 describes how

The practice has been to let a great deal of land to some Irish gentleman who has nothing of his own so that he may bring in his followers, and while he makes them pay double the rent, he lives idly on the overplus himself. Besides, while all these depend on his protection, they follow his bagpipe, whenever disturbances happen.

In a state now dominated by an English-speaking elite, a largely Irish-speaking society turned in upon itself. The landlords, overwhelmingly English in origin, were content to deal with their Irish tenants through a 'broker', either a 'middleman' or the local priest.

In principle, there was little reason why this cultural balance of power in Ireland should ever change. Indeed, the elaborate system of penal laws, excluding Catholics from the exercise of political power, was intended to ensure that it did not. Among the remaining rump of Catholic aristocrats there was a steady drift into the Established Church. Among the Presbyterians, emigration to North America seems to have acted as something of a safety valve. The Irish Catholics remained tranquil during the pro-Stuart risings of 1715 and 1745 in Scotland, although recent research by Professor Brendan O Buachalla has now shown that Irish Jacobitism in the first half of the century was much stronger than had been thought. It no longer seems strange that the Young Pretender's entourage at his landing in Scotland in 1745 included Irishmen.

From the mid-eighteenth century, however, signs of change began to appear. Defeat at Culloden undermined hope of a Stuart restoration and by the late 1770s the Catholic bishops approved an oath of loyalty to George III. Economic prosperity also helped. Ireland, like Scotland and Wales, responded to the challenge of the growing markets of England and the colonies: the result was to create three specialised economic areas in the east of the country – the linen-producing counties of Ulster east of the Bann, the wheat-producing counties of Leinster and the 'dairying' and

cattle-producing counties of Munster. The growth of economic activity was reflected in the growth of market towns and larger centres, such as Cork City, which became a centre of the export market in butter. Limerick, once a military base, became a large provision market. Ballinasloe was one of several large sheep markets in the midlands. In Leinster, Dublin enjoyed remarkable growth during these years. In Ulster, Belfast became the main market outlet for the linen industry, after the opening up of the Lagan navigation in 1756.

The prime beneficiary of these changes was the ascendancy landlord class, as the architecture of the second half of the eighteenth century makes clear. The great houses of the ascendancy (the 'Big House' of common parlance) were built within reach of the growing ports, on the basis of the newly found prosperity. In Ulster, landlords took the initiative in encouraging the development of linen manufactures on their estates. The marquess of Downshire became one of the richest men in the kingdom as a result of such enterprise. In Leinster, the confidence of the landlords was displayed in the building of the Grand Canal and the Royal Canal as a means of opening up the midlands to the market. The great victory of the landlords came in 1782 when they forced Lord North's government to grant them a larger measure of political autonomy. During the American war the Volunteers, raised to meet the threat of French invasion and led largely by the landlords, proved to be a powerful weapon in the hands of the ascendancy. Political reforms were kept at arm's length. The post-1782 Irish parliament may be called 'Grattan's parliament' but it was largely dominated not by the liberal Grattan but by his die-hard opponents, who resisted any change which might weaken the ascendancy.

The landlords were not the only class to benefit from the economic revival. In Munster and Leinster a rural middle class of 'strong farmers' appeared, many of them Catholic. In this development, Irish agrarian society was following the English pattern of change in response to the market, which had brought about the replacement of small farmers by a system based on large tenant farmers and labourers. There was also the rise of a comparable urban middle class, much of it Catholic. Slowly and cautiously these groups began to press for the repeal of the penal laws which, though largely a dead letter in some areas, still remained on the statute book. The Catholic Committee was formed in 1772 as a lobby to bring pressure to bear on the government. As a consequence of this, some important economic grievances were redressed during the period of the American war. Penal prohibitions relating to officeholding, voting and sitting in the House of Commons still remained, however, and were to become a major political issue before the end of the century.

In Ulster, Presbyterian merchants, farmers and shopkeepers had also profited from the expansion of the English and colonial market. Belfast and Londonderry were both prosperous and growing ports. Belfast, in particular, replaced Dublin as the outlet for much of the Ulster linen industry. Presbyterians did not suffer from the same range of legal disabilities as the Catholics. Nonetheless, they were excluded from playing their full role in political life as a result of the operation of the Test Act of 1704, requiring local officeholders to take the Anglican sacrament. At a local level, Presbyterians saw key decisions being taken by unrepresentative grand juries dominated by landlords or their agents. At a national level, the choice of parliamentary candidates was frequently decided by closed urban corporations, from which Presbyterians were excluded. Though the offending act was repealed in 1782, many grievances still remained.

Many farmers had benefited from the expansion of the market. As in England, however, there were those for whom economic change brought the prospect of insecurity and downward social mobility. The rapid expansion of new-style farming in parts of Leinster and Munster reduced the land available for small farmers and turned many of them into labourers. Agrarian unrest was the consequence, especially in the rich agricultural land of the Golden Vale. This 'Whiteboy' movement of the 1760s was followed by a similar 'Rightboy' movement in the 1780s. Though it is possible to differentiate between the two movements, it seems clear that they were both responses to the pressures of the market. The 'Rightboys', for example, complained about the use of cheap labour, the rise in rents and the practice of advertising vacant farms for sale, thus making them available to non-locals. The areas affected were precisely those in which the market economy was making most headway. Connacht, where subsistence farming was the norm, was unaffected. In the north, however, where the farmers were also exposed to market pressures, there were similar outbreaks during the 1770s and 1780s by 'Oakboys' and 'Steelboys', who drew their membership from Presbyterian small farmers. Here the rise in rents, the payment of tithes and increased charges for the use of turf for fuel were major grievances.

Rural violence often took a sectarian form especially where the payment of tithes was an issue. The main outbreak of sectarian violence, however, took place in an area which had been affected by the onset of proto-industrialisation. This was Co. Armagh, where the growth of the linen industry had led to the creation of new industrial villages such as Keady and Newtown Hamilton in parts of Ulster which had hitherto been unaffected by the market. It is still not clear why conflict should have arisen between episcopalian 'Peep O Day Boys' and Catholic 'Defenders' in the 1780s. Perhaps each regarded the other as intruders and a threat to their standard of living. The rural population, largely Catholic, may

have seen the new villages as a danger. Whatever the reasons, sectarian violence was a feature of the 1780s in these newly industrialised areas. The antagonisms of the Reformation had returned, this time in a 'modern' environment.

The most serious crisis which the ascendancy had to face came in the 1790s when the United Irishmen, after pressing unsuccessfully for political change, rose in revolt in 1798. Fortunately for the landlords, the rebels failed. The rebellion, however, did prove to be more widespread than the country-wide outbreaks of rural protest which had taken place from the 1760s onwards. In the north, the Presbyterian farmers of Antrim and Down, or some of them, were 'out' (i.e. in rebellion) in 1798. South of Dublin, in Wicklow, Wexford and Carlow, small farmers also rose in revolt. But most of Ireland, especially the west, where a small French force landed in 1798, was uninvolved.

Tom Paine's *Rights of Man* circulated in the cities of the east coast (Wolfe Tone called it the 'Koran of Belfast'), but sectarian hostility proved to be more powerful than ideals of universal brotherhood. In Co. Armagh, sectarian conflict had already broken out in the 1780s. It became more intense after the outbreak of the French Revolution and the rise of the United Irishmen. In 1795, after a violent clash between Catholic and Protestant at the Diamond (Co. Armagh), landlords placed themselves at the head of a 'Church and King' organisation known as the Orange Order. On the strongly episcopalian estates of the north, Protestant landlords and tenants were enabled to unite under the banner of 'No Popery'. Not all landlords followed this course. The Whig earl of Gosford was a notable exception, but it was the general tendency among more conservative landlords.

In the counties south of Ulster, where Catholics were in a majority, the situation was different. Here a Protestant presence was looked upon as an indication that landlords were attempting a policy of 'colonisation'. In Co. Louth, John Foster, former speaker of the Irish House of Commons, openly advertised for Protestant tenants. In Wicklow, villages like Newtown Mount Kennedy were newly established Protestant centres in a largely Catholic countryside. Thus the south became a reverse image of the north. In Armagh, a Protestant declared, 'Sir, I hate a Papist as I do a toad and none of my neighbours has gone further in their extirpation than I have.' In Cavan, a group of Catholic Defenders stated their intention to 'destroy every Scotchman or Presbyterian they could find'. The worst excesses, however, were reserved for Wexford in 1798. Nearly one hundred Protestants were executed in Wexford town and a number of others were burned alive in a barn at Scullabogue, near New Ross. The shadow of 1798 lay heavily over nineteenth-century Irish history, both in

the north, where Scullabogue was remembered, and in the south where the counter-atrocities perpetrated by the militia passed into popular consciousness.

The rebellion of 1798 led Pitt to conclude that a union of Ireland with Britain was a political necessity, in spite of the opposition of the ascendancy. The result of two years of pressure upon the Irish parliament was the Act of Union of 1800 which provided for Irish representation in the House of Commons (100 members) as well as for the election of 25 representative peers to the House of Lords. It was intended that the Act would win Catholic support thanks to an additional measure admitting Irish Catholic MPs, but George III refused to give way on what he regarded as an essential element of the constitution. For some time, therefore, the full implications of the Act of Union were concealed. Of the three cultures of Ireland, it was only one, the Anglo-Irish episcopalian interest, which was represented at Westminster. The Irish Catholic bishops gave their support to the measure but reaped no reward. In Ireland, at least for the moment, the ascendancy was victorious.

In Scotland, in the years following the Glorious Revolution, there were three distinctive cultures: the Presbyterianism of much of the Lowlands and those parts of the Highlands under Campbell influence; the episcopalianism of the east coast, north of the Tay; and the residual Catholicism of a few scattered areas, especially those under MacDonald control in the Isles. Of these, Catholicism, despite Presbyterian obsessions with the growth of 'Popery', was the least important. The real struggle in Scotland lay between the cultures of Presbyterianism and episcopalianism, each with their own interpretation of the recent past. The episcopalians who had been royalist in the civil war looked back to the memory of Montrose, whose remains, scattered after his execution, had been recovered and buried with due solemnity at the Restoration. (The Montrose legend, however, was complicated by his Covenanting past.) The Presbyterian version of recent history singled out the 'Killing Time' after the Restoration, when their most zealous members had been persecuted. During the rebellion of 1715, Jacobite commanders asked strangers, whose sympathies were unknown, whether they attended the meeting house (episcopal) or the church (Presbyterian), a clear indication of how the battle lines were drawn.

The Glorious Revolution replaced an episcopalian ascendancy with a Presbyterian ascendancy. In 1690 the victors abolished lay patronage and placed the presentation of ministers in the hands of the presbytery and the heritor (chief landowner) of the parish. The Kirk Session, made up of ministers and elders, became the chosen instrument for the enforcement of Presbyterian views on private and public morality. With the backing
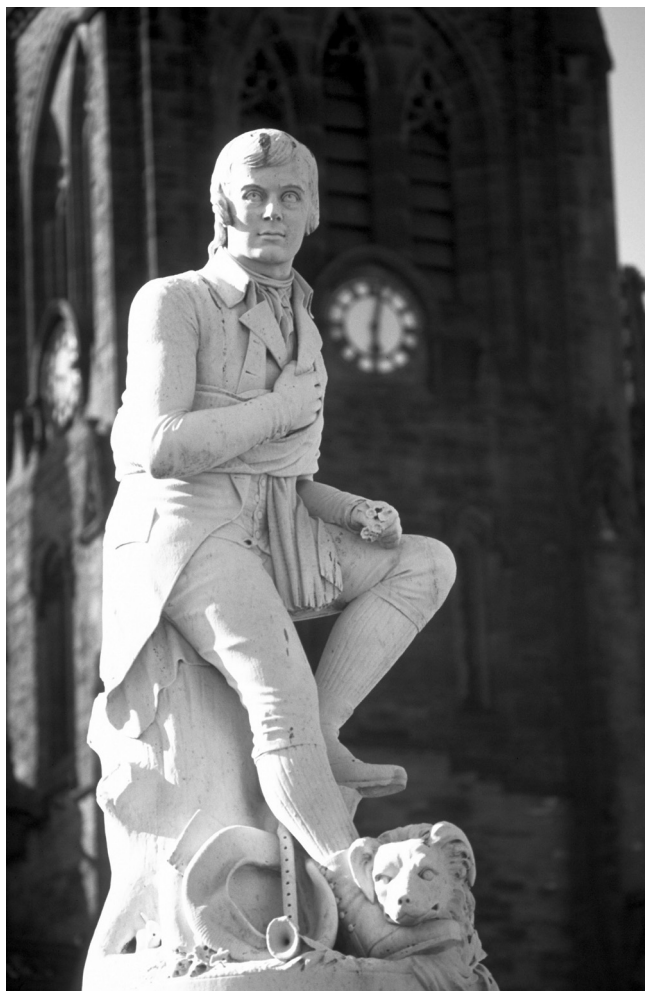
Figure 27. *Statue of Robert Burns (1759–96)*
The poetry of Robert Burns provided a powerful counterblast to the
Puritanism of official Scottish culture. Burns became a symbol of a pop-
ular democratic tradition, today annually renewed in the Burns Night
suppers. Burns was also popular among the Ulster Scots.

of the English government, the newly established Church was able to
exercise its authority south of the Forth. In the south-west, Glasgow,
Ayrshire and Galloway, the Covenanters were dominant. In Edinburgh,
William Carstares, who had once been tortured on suspicion during the
Rye House Plot, was the spokesman for William III. Episcopalian clergy
in strongly Presbyterian areas were 'rabbled' by hostile gangs and forced

to leave their parishes. Others were accused of immorality and ejected by special committees set up by the General Assembly. In Scotland, more so than elsewhere in the British Isles, the Glorious Revolution possessed a revolutionary character, displacing one regime and establishing another.

North of the Forth, among the great landowners and gentry of the east coast, the story was more complicated. Here there was no equivalent of the great cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh. Episcopalian landowners, secure in their estates and the backing of equally well-established relatives or patrons, were able to resist the pressures of the General Assembly. The universities of St Andrews and Aberdeen were purged of episcopalians but even so it was said in 1749 that episcopalian schools in the north-east 'poisoned the greatest part of the Young Gentry of those parts with Principles that have since thoroughly appeared – For as the young gentlemen came to their estates, Nonjuring meeting houses were instantly erected on their Lands: and they were themselves almost to a man the officers in the Rebel army in 1745'. Presbyterian ministers found it difficult to make headway, in the face of gentry hostility, after lay patronage was restored by the Patronage Act of 1712, during the Tory-dominated last years of Anne. In Scotland as a whole the real power of the establishment was confined to the area south of the Forth–Clyde line. Without the backing of the English government, the Presbyterian cause might well have been placed in jeopardy and it was the knowledge of this which created among the Presbyterians a strong commitment to the Act of Union of 1707.

Among the Presbyterians there was a wide variety of opinion ranging from the Cameronians at one end of the spectrum with their distrust of the secular world and the Moderates at the other. The Kirk Session of Morton may be taken as representing one powerful strain in its fierce denunciation of dancing in 1715:

Considering that the great abuse that is commeted at wedding dinners and in particular by promiscuous dancing betwixt young men and young women which is most abominable, not to be practised in a land of light, and condemned in former time of Presbytery as not only unnecessary but sensuall, being only an inlet of lust and provocation to uncleanness of men and women in this loose and degenerate age, wherein the devil seems to be raging by a spirit of uncleanness and profanity.

Robert Woodrow, historian of the days of persecution, lamented in 1725 that 'Wickedness is come to a new height.' He protested that 'all the villainous, profane and obscene books and plays, as printed in London, are got down by Allen Ramsay and lent out for an easy price, to young boys, servant girls of the better sort, and gentlemen'. The Moderates, represented by such figures as the historian William Robertson, friend of David Hume, took a more detached view of the temptations of secular

culture, and it was from this end of the Presbyterian spectrum that the Scottish Enlightenment, or much of it, emerged.

The first open conflict between the two cultures came after the accession of the Hanoverian George I in 1714. In 1715 the episcopalians rose in revolt in the name of James VIII, counting upon widespread resentment against the Act of Union to bring the uncommitted over to their side. For a year, the future of Scotland, and perhaps of the British Isles, was in the balance, much as it had been during 'the troubles' of the previous century. In the event, however, the Presbyterian regime survived, though the gap between the two cultures remained as wide as ever.

The rebellion of 1745, though more celebrated in romantic legend than the '15, was much less of a threat to the government. The Young Pretender found support only among a minority of Highland clans and among a fringe of discontented episcopalian gentry. The initiative for the rebellion seems to have come largely from France as a means of creating trouble in northern Britain. The great magnates and substantial gentry stayed aloof from what they saw as an ill-conceived venture. One of the MacDonald chiefs urged Charles to go back home. However limited the support which Charles received among the episcopalians, one of the consequences of the rebellion was to widen the rift between them and the Presbyterian establishment. The penalties levied on unqualified clergymen were increased in 1746 and again in 1748. Clergymen found breaking the law by preaching to more than four people were made liable to six months' imprisonment for the first offence and to banishment for life after the second. Meeting houses were plundered or burned down. It was not until 1792, four years after the death of Charles, that these penal laws were repealed.

The tensions between Presbyterian and episcopalian culture were well exemplified in the life of Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832). There were episcopalians in Scott's background but he was brought up by a father who was a strict Presbyterian. Scott recalled how his father observed the Sabbath by preaching three sermons to the household, cross-questioning his audience at the end to see how well they had listened. When one of the family praised the Sunday broth as 'good', Scott's father poured a cup of cold water into his plate, saying 'Aye, too good'. Scott himself reacted against this upbringing. He married an episcopalian and his children were christened by episcopalian ministers. His novels *Waverley* and *Old Mortality* indicate how Scott looked upon the recent history of Scotland as a clash between two cultures.

The battle of Culloden in 1746 was the Scottish equivalent of the battle of the Boyne. Victory gave the Presbyterians a new confidence in their own future, creating conditions which made possible the rise of open divisions within the Established Church, between the 'Moderate' and

'Popular' parties. In the absence of a Scottish parliament, the General Assembly provided the occasion for debates upon issues of the day. In the main, the Moderates could be relied upon to support government policy, notably during the American wars. The Popular party, which was more critical of the role of government patronage in the Kirk, supported the Americans. On a different issue, the passing of a Catholic Relief Act in 1778, the parties also took different sides, the Moderates being in favour of the official policy of toleration. Outside the establishment lay a number of seceding sects, divided among themselves and from the establishment about the correct relationship between Church and State.

The confidence of the establishment was also bolstered by the economic revival of mid-century. The initial impact of the Union had been disappointing. Such economic changes as took place were on a small scale. In the south-west, Glasgow merchants began to take advantage of the opening-up of trade with the American colonies though Edinburgh remained the largest city in Scotland. In the Highlands, first in Kintyre and then, in 1737, on the rest of his estates, the duke of Argyll introduced a system of cash rentals, replacing the indirect link through the 'tacksmen' (the Scottish equivalent of the Irish 'middleman'). But in Scotland, as in Ireland, it was not until mid-century that the various regions began to respond to the stimulus of the growing English and colonial market.

Signs of economic change become much more numerous in the second half of the eighteenth century. The Clyde grew as a centre of trade with the colonies. In Glasgow the building of Virginia Street (1753) and Jamaica Street (1761) was evidence of a growing faith in a colonial future. In Edinburgh, after the draining of the North loch and the construction of the North Bridge in 1767, the building of the New Town began, with its long list of streets dedicated to the British link.

Change was slow to come in the rural world but here also opportunities offered by a wider English market proved difficult to resist. Most of the better land in the Lowlands was enclosed during the second half of the eighteenth century with commercial production as the end in view. Old-style runrig (the equivalent of Irish rundale), with its communal sharing of land, gave way gradually to individual farms on the English model of tenant farmer and labourer. For the farmers this meant prosperity. For the labourers the barrack-like bothies had little to recommend them. 'Improvement' on these lines made headway first in the Lothians of the south-east, with its rich soils. In the north-east the pace of change was slower. It was not until the 1790s that roads up to the new standards began to be built on any scale in Aberdeenshire. In all areas landlords came to see the planned village on the English model as a means of stimulating economic growth on their estates, though in many cases the experience proved less than satisfying. Planned villages such as Gifford

and Ormiston survive as a reminder of this phase of Scottish economic history when an 'Anglomania' affected the Scottish landlords as much as it did the French. (In Ireland also at this time, the planned village made its appearance.)

Changes in the Lowlands were undramatic. The most dramatic changes occurred in the Highlands in the aftermath of the defeat of the clans at Culloden in 1746. Traditional dress was banned and hereditary jurisdiction, the source of the legal powers enjoyed by the chiefs, abolished by act of parliament in 1747. The chiefs' estates were put into the hands of Lowlanders who lost little time in replacing traditional land-holding with cash rentals. To some extent these changes had been taking place piecemeal. The '45 rebellion itself may be seen as an attempt to halt the process of change, but overwhelming defeat at Culloden in 1746 left the Highlands defenceless. Planned villages made their appearance in the Highlands, sometimes with the aim of providing quasi-colonial settlements for demobilised troops. When, in 1773, Dr Johnson visited the Highlands in the company of Boswell, he was conscious of seeing a culture in decay.

The middle of the eighteenth century may be taken as marking the end of a period. Two centuries earlier there was by and large a balance between two cultures, Highland and Lowland. The long-term effects of the Reformation, the connection with England and the plantation of Ulster led to a shift in the balance in favour of the Lowlands (now split over the issue of episcopacy). When the kilt and the tartan returned in the nineteenth century, it was as part of the Romantic movement. Lowlanders flocked to identify themselves with the clans from which they had fled less than a century earlier. The cult of 'Ossian' (Oisin was the son of Fionn MacCumhail in Irish legend) added to the confusion. James Macpherson claimed to have discovered long-lost Scottish manuscripts which were earlier than their Irish counterparts and, though Dr Johnson among others denounced him as a forger, the Ossianic myth continued to exercise an extraordinary fascination. In this way Highland culture survived in transmogrified form in the Lowlands long after the social reality had passed away in the Highlands themselves.

For a good deal of the eighteenth century the significance of Scotland within a British Isles context was political, in the sense that successive governments used episcopalian discontent under the guise of 'Jacobitism' to keep alive the prospect of a 'Popish' king. During the seventeenth century Irish Catholicism had played the part of bogeyman. During the next century the Whig ministry in London cast the episcopalians in a similar role. The long Whig ascendancy after 1714 rested in large measure upon the way in which the Whigs played the 'Jacobite card'. The passing

Figure 28. *The United Irishmen 1798*
Henry Joy McCracken (1767–98) was one of the leaders of the United
Irishmen. He took part in the battle of Antrim and was later executed.
'Henry Joy' symbolises the role of Ulster Presbyterians and freethinkers
in the wider movement first of reform and then of rebellion through-
out Ireland which culminated in the rising of 1798. The term United
Irishmen was intended to link all religious persuasions, Catholic and
Protestant alike; '1798' left a lasting impression upon Irish history.

of the Septennial Act in 1716, extending the life of parliament from three to seven years, was made possible by the fear of Jacobitism. Scotland influenced the course of English history in the seventeenth century; it did so equally, if less dramatically, during the eighteenth.

Under the influence of Sir Lewis Namier, historians of the eighteenth century have been particularly prone to see the history of England in narrowly English terms. If the approach adopted here is correct, however, this is a self-defeating procedure. England, as a consequence of decisions made during the Reformation period, had become the centre of an empire, the various cultures of which interacted with those of the mother country as well as with each other. The culture of the English establishment undoubtedly became more powerful than it had been earlier but the fact remains that the cultures of the 'periphery', especially those of Scotland and colonial America, influenced the course of events in England itself. Ireland was more isolated, but even here, as we have seen, the Scotch-Irish came to form part of the story of 1776. In England, the names of Swift, Burke, Goldsmith and Sheridan indicate that the Anglo-Irish element in the culture of the metropolis cannot be ignored. In addition, though the 'Irish Question' did not assume the proportions which it reached during the nineteenth century, unrest in Ireland during the crisis years of 1796–1800 became an object of great concern for Pitt's administration. Pitt was willing to risk alienating Protestant opinion by granting concessions to Irish Catholics in order to make Ireland more secure. The Irish rebellion of 1798 also made possible an Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland. This was an enactment which proved to have profound consequences for the history of the British Isles during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Over much of the history of the English empire during the eighteenth century there looms the shadow of the Reformation rather than the Enlightenment. In order to understand the outlook of the various cultures which went to make up the empire, it is the events of the century earlier rather than those of the eighteenth century itself which provide the key. In England, the execution of Charles I was still a live issue, in Ireland, the massacre of 1641, in Scotland, Montrose and Claverhouse, in colonial America, the memory of Hampden and Sidney. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 was merely one of a number of events which gave meaning to particular pasts.

Postscript

Since this book was first published a spate of scholarly studies have appeared concerned with what we may now call the 'British' empire,

a political reality from 1707 when the Act of Union made it possible for the Scots to take full advantage of the opportunities of imperial expansion. Mention may first be made of *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689–1815* (Stone, ed., 1994) which, building upon John Brewer's *The Sinews of Power* (1989), stresses the importance of the imperial dimension to the British State and by implication highlights the deficiencies of the narrowly Anglo-centric approach of the Namier school. As already mentioned, this new interest in empire also raised awareness of the role of the slave trade in the development of ports such as Bristol and Liverpool. As mentioned above, David Ellis, in *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, 2000), showed how Britain took a leading role in developing this highly profitable trade in human beings. Historians were always aware of the slave trade but it is only in recent years that it has come to be a central topic for research. Professor N.A.M. Rodger's fine study *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649–1815* (London, 2004) is essential reading.

In many ways, however, the most influential piece of history concerned with the eighteenth century has been Professor Linda Colley's recent study *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837*. In this book she argues that the period from the passing of the Anglo-Scottish Union in 1707 witnessed the creation of a new British identity based in large measure upon a shared Protestantism, a deep hatred of Britain's chief enemy and rival, France, and a newly developed respect for the British monarch. James I (VI) had hoped that the Union of the Crowns in 1603 would lead to a common British identity in his newly named Kingdom of Great Britain but in the face of English political opposition this did not come about. In 1707, however, the government itself took the lead in promoting the Anglo-Scottish Union amid the fears of French invasion, and in due course after 1714, the Hanoverian monarchs came to symbolise a common Protestantism opposed to the Catholic Stuarts.

This new sense of British identity, which is the central theme of Colley's book, was symbolised most dramatically in the building of Edinburgh's 'New Town' after 1760 with its George Street, Hanover Street, and Charlotte Square. 'Britishness' was an identity sponsored and encouraged from the 'top down', 'officially constructed' in Colley's words (p. 145) but also calling upon popular support. The key period in her view was after 1783.

In the half century after the American War, there would emerge in Great Britain a far more consciously and officially constructed patriotism which stressed attachment to the monarchy, the value of military and naval achievement and the desirability of strong, stable government by a virtuous, able and authentically British elite. (L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nations 1707–1837* (Yale, 1992), p. 145)

Colley here uses the term 'patriotism'. Elsewhere she refers to the 'evolution of what must be called British nationalism' and to the creation of Great Britain as an 'invented' nation (p. 5). Colley is in effect providing a case study in nationalism and it is in this, I believe, that much of her originality lies. Colley's 'Britain' is not a special case. Indeed, as she herself comments, her approach is a landmark in the sense that it enables us to compare British nationalism with other European nationalisms. Colley's 'Britain' is not a special case. Indeed, as she herself comments, her approach resembles that which Eugene Weber took in his study of French nationalism, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Stanford, 1976), but whereas Weber was concerned with the impact of 'modernisation' in the form of railways and mass education, Colley's emphasis falls upon religion and national hostility towards the French in what amounted to xenophobia. It should also be added that the dominant French national identity from 1870 was civic and secular in contrast to the ethno-religious element in British nationalism.

A critical discussion of the implications of *Britons* lies beyond the scope of this 'postscript'. Two points may be made, however. The first is that by stressing the creation of national unity Colley invites us to re-evaluate what had been seen in the standard interpretation of the 1790s and later decades as a period of 'reaction'. In this sense she has provided a Tory version of this period which challenges that offered by Edward Thompson in his *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1967). Colley plays down the role of class conflict and takes a more positive view of religion than does Thompson, but in order to do justice to the complexities of this period, however, we perhaps need to read each historian in relation to the other, testing their contrasting but not mutually exclusive hypotheses.

Our second point relates to Colley's treatment of the Act of Union of 1801 which created a United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. In my view, she fails to make her readers aware of the full impact of this upon the British (sc. Anglo-Scottish) State which had been in existence since 1707. In 1821 the population of Ireland amounted to 6.8 million compared to 0.7 million for Wales, 2.0 million for Scotland and 11.2 million for England (see L. Stone, ed., *An Imperial State at War* (1994), p. 73). Thus the incorporation of Ireland had immense implications for the United Kingdom, especially as 4 million of its inhabitants were Catholic. Had the political identity of this British state been 'civic', the problems of assimilating its new members would still have been considerable. As Colley has demonstrated, however, the predominant national identity was Protestant. Catholic Emancipation had been refused in Ireland in 1793 and was still being refused in 1801 partly as a consequence of George III's belief that his coronation oath required him to stand by 'the Protestant Constitution'. As if to emphasise the point that the religious situation

would not change, the Protestant Church of Ireland remained an established church, with the legal right, based upon the constitution, to levy tithes. In effect after 1801 a Protestant Ascendancy was left in power.

Colley's 'Britons', or some of them, had been very much involved in the suppression of the United Irishmen in Ulster after 1796. Welsh and Scottish 'fencibles' (i.e. troops raised for defence) took part in the bloody campaign of 1797 known as 'the dragooning of Ulster' (Ian MacBride, *Scripture Politics* (Oxford, 1998), p. 183). In the eyes of one general, Ulster was the equivalent of England's Vendée, namely a rebellious province to be brought to heel by means which seemed appropriate, including hanging, half-hanging or pitch capping. The year 1798 brought the French Revolution to Ireland with all its violence. Leinster and Connaught as well as Ulster were now fully involved in what amounted to civil war. To ignore it as Professor Colley does in confining her attention to Britain is to leave out of account an episode which provides an illuminating case study of British nationalism in action. Thus 'The Ancient Britons, a Welsh fencible regiment which arrived in Ulster in April [1797], was particularly feared and hated' (MacBride, *Scripture Politics* (1998, p. 183). One observer later recalled that 'the established clergy, whom he christened the "church militant" were among the most zealous exponents of this policy' (*ibid.*, p. 184). The 'Ireland' which joined Great Britain in the political union of 1801 was in fact a society emerging from a decade of revolutions and counter-revolutions with a recent history very different from that of Scotland and Wales. To understand the Irish problem of the nineteenth century requires some awareness of this.

Finally, in making her point about the strength of British nationalism Professor Colley tempts us to ignore the existence of what we might call 'Radical Britain'. It is true that radical opinion was much weakened after the loss of America and was much weakened after the outbreak of war with France in 1793. Even so, however, we expect some mention of Jeremy Bentham and philosophical Radicalism, of Peterloo, of Shelley's reference to 'An old, mad, blind depressed and dying King' (from his sonnet, 'England in 1819') and to the Extraordinary Black Book. Daniel O Connell deserves much more than a brief reference to Catholic emancipation and a note about support for women's rights (Colley, *Britons*, pp. 279–80). It would be unfair, however, to conclude these comments on too critical a note. *Britons* is an extraordinarily rich and original book which among its valuable features provides informed comment upon the historical implications of individual works of art. Above all it makes its readers aware of a phenomenon whose existence is often denied – British nationalism.

It remains to mention important studies in Scottish and Irish history which have appeared since 1989 and which are relevant to our 'British

Isles' model. Colin Kidd, in his *Subverting Scotland's Past* (Cambridge, 1993), shows how the dominant version of Scottish identity, tracing it back to early Celtic times, was undermined during the Scottish Enlightenment only to be replaced by the image of the Scot as Highlander. Kidd has illuminating chapters in Fr Innes (who first exploded the established myth), William Robertson, Sir James Macpherson and Sir Walter Scott, all important influences upon the creation of a new sense of Scottish identity. His later book *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World 1600–1800* (Cambridge, 1999) discusses ethnic identities in the British Isles as a whole with the aim of demonstrating their secondary importance in relation to confessional loyalties. These two works are a remarkable scholarly achievement. Clare O'Halloran's *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations: Antiquarian Debate and Cultural Politics in Ireland, c.1750–1800* (Cork, 2004) is a parallel study raising comparisons between Ireland and Scotland. Part of the interest of O'Halloran's book lies in her description of the search for an inclusive civic identity in Ireland in the mid- and late eighteenth century.

There has also been a remarkable efflorescence of Irish historiography dealing with the eighteenth century. S.J. Connolly provides an illuminating overview in his chapter in D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day (eds.), *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy* (London, 1996). The extent to which Ireland should be seen as an *ancien régime* rather than a colony is now a matter for debate. Brendan O Buachalla has also raised new issues for historians of the British Isles by demonstrating that Irish Jacobitism was much more powerful than has been supposed hitherto (see *Irish Review* 12, 1992). His work has been followed up by Vincent Morley in his *Irish Opinion and the American Revolution 1760–1783* (Cambridge, 2002) and Eamonn O Ciardha, *Ireland and the Jacobite Cause 1685–1766* (Dublin, 2002). The centenary of the Rebellion of 1798 also gave rise to a lively debate which may be followed in Kevin Whelan's *The Tree of Liberty* (Cork, 1996) and other works by him and in Tom Dunne's fascinating study *Rebellions: Memoir, Memory and 1798* (Dublin, 2004). Ian MacBride's *Scripture Politics: Ulster Presbyterians and Irish Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1998) is essential reading for Ireland as a whole. The journal *Eighteenth Century Ireland* also provides an invaluable guide to current debate, as does Jim Smyth's general survey, *The Making of the United Kingdom 1600–1800: Religion and Identity in Britain and Ireland* (London, 2001).

9　The Britannic melting pot

During the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the balance of cultures within the British Isles once more shifted radically. In England, the social, demographic and economic changes, which are usually subsumed under the portmanteau concept 'Industrial Revolution', led to the creation of a new urban culture in 'the north', a term which may be used to include the industrial areas of the west midlands as well as the areas north of the Trent. 'The north' in this sense comprised the large cities of Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds and Newcastle, the factory towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire and the mining villages of the counties north of Nottinghamshire. Historians have tended to treat 'the midlands' as if it were different from 'the north'. In fact, however, there seems to be no good reason why we should not look upon 'the midlands' as a sub-culture within the north. From this point of view, the midlands, Merseyside, Manchester and its hinterland, the West Riding, Tyneside and Teesside all constituted sub-cultures within an overwhelmingly industrial 'northern' culture. (An exception to this general northern pattern was Cornwall with its tin and copper mining.)

The new economic importance of 'the north' appeared all the more striking when contrasted with the decline of London as an industrial centre. Industries, such as shipbuilding and silk weaving, unable to compete with northern competition, sank into insignificance. Other skilled trades such as coopering and watch manufacture declined, especially after 1850. In 1870, Sir Charles Trevelyan described the metropolis as 'a gigantic engine for depraving and degrading our population' and 'a common sink of everything that is worst in the United Kingdom'. In some London-based occupations, such as dock labour, brewing and transport, wages were driven down by the importation of cheap labour from the depressed agricultural counties of the south-west, from Wales and from Ireland. The immigration of many thousands of east European Jews in the 1880s led to fierce competition in the tailoring and shoemaking industries, already hard-pressed by provincial competition. London retained its importance

Figure 29. *The Palace of Westminster*

After the fire of 1834, the palace at Westminster was rebuilt on lines which followed the traditional constitution of king, lords and commons together with the four nations of the 1801 Act of Union. Since then much has changed. Scotland has its own parliament, Wales its assembly and there is now a Republic of Ireland. The British monarchy and the House of Lords still have a prime place in the ritual of opening parliament but constitutionally the House of Commons is dominant. The art and architecture of the Palace of Westminster repay study. It is noticeable, for example, that images of the mythical King Arthur are prominent, whereas such figures as Jeremy Bentham or the Chartists are absent.

as a banking and insurance centre but in general it now faced severe
competition from 'the north'.

Changes in the cultural balance also took place in other parts of the
British Isles. In Scotland, the growth of Glasgow and the towns which
surrounded it led to the rapid rise of Clydeside as a centre of industry and
mining, rivalling the English west midlands. Social and economic changes
were accompanied in due course by religious change, in this case by the
split known as the 'Disruption' (1843) within the established Presbyte-
rian Church. In terms of Scotland as a whole the Highlands became less
important. The division between Highlands and Lowlands was overshad-
owed by a new divide, that between the heavily industrial south-west and
the more conservative and rural east, with Edinburgh as its capital. As
in Wales and Ireland, there was an anglicised gentry in Scotland, which,
as an ascendancy class, retained much of its power and influence. Amid
all this change there took place the rise of new sub-cultures created by
the influx of Catholic and Protestant immigrants from Ulster in search
of employment.

In Wales, similar changes took place as a consequence of the industri-
alisation of south Wales and to a lesser extent of north-west Wales. As we
have seen, there had always been regional differences in Wales, but the
contrast between the Welsh-speaking rural north and the more anglicised
industrial south was intensified by the economic and social changes of
the nineteenth century. Cardiff became a 'melting pot' attracting English
and Irish immigrants as well as internal migrants from Cardiganshire and
rural counties. Welshmen also poured into Liverpool, and any history of
Wales which left out the role of Liverpool during this period would be
unbalanced. In the early twentieth century a revivalist preacher said that
he preferred to speak in 'Welsh Liverpool' rather than 'English Cardiff'.
A third culture, that of the English-orientated gentry, lost ground during
this period. Gentry families which dominated the parliamentary repre-
sentation of Wales in 1800 had vanished from view by 1900.

It remains to mention Ireland. Here the counterpart of the rise of north-
ern England, Clydeside and Glamorgan was the industrial expansion of
Belfast and the Lagan valley. It was Ulster which benefited from the Act of
Union in spite of the initial fears of Orangemen. The south, by contrast,
suffered from considerable de-industrialisation and the infant industries
which had made their appearance under the wing of the protectionist
legislation before 1800 found it impossible to compete with the flood of
cheap goods from England. Dublin became an economic backwater as
Belfast prospered. Ulster, which had taken very much a second place to
the south for much of the later medieval and early modern period, became
the centre of a confident, expanding culture. One of the casualties of the
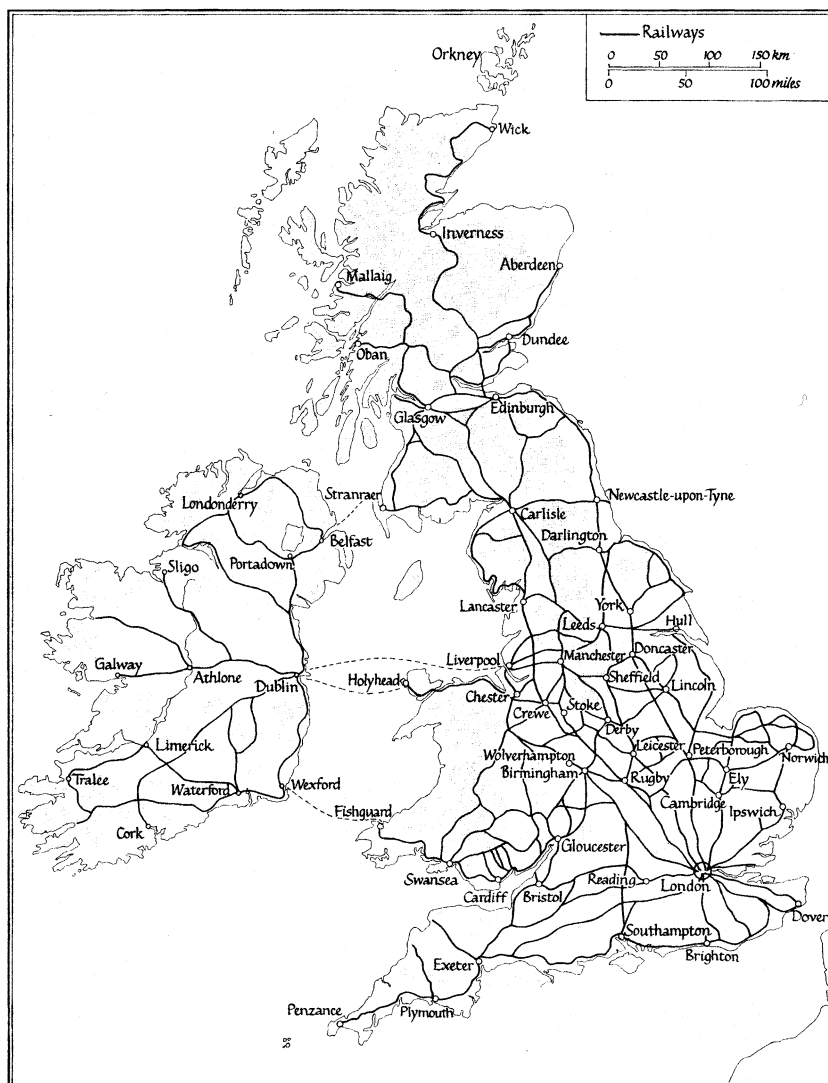
Map 16. The railway age during the nineteenth century.

nineteenth century was the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, which, like its equiv-
alent in Wales, gradually lost its political grip, outside the province of
Ulster.

The Great Famine of 1845–9, however, was a key event or series of
events, which over a century later has lost none of its power to shock. It has

been estimated that over a million died of starvation or disease, the west of Ireland being the hardest hit. Massive emigration followed, often under conditions of severe deprivation. Irish immigration had massive social consequences for the English north-west and for the west of Scotland. It is the impact of the Famine on the United States which has attracted most attention, in the process creating parallels with the Jewish Holocaust.

The famine provides a necessary background for the history of immigration into the British Isles during the nineteenth century. It was not the only factor, however. Historians once argued that the rapid growth of British industrial cities was made possible by a shift of population from the rural south to the industrial north. Their emphasis now is upon the influx into the cities from local areas. Looked at in the context of the British Isles, however, it is clear that there was a good deal of population movement from one cultural zone to another. The result was to create in cities such as Glasgow, Liverpool, Belfast and Cardiff a 'melting pot' effect, marked by inter-ethnic hostility. Football teams such as Celtic and Rangers in Glasgow, Hearts and Hibernian in Edinburgh, Dundee United and Dundee FC in Dundee, Belfast Celtic and Linfield in Belfast, and Everton and Liverpool on Merseyside drew their support from different ethnic communities. In Wales, internal migrants from the rural north faced the hostility of the southerners who denounced the 'Cardies' from Cardiganshire.

In northern England, Jack Lawson looking back from 1932 described the way in which 'the county of Durham has become a sort of social melting pot owing to the rapid development of the coalfield during the nineteenth century'.

By the time of which I write [1890s] there was a combination of Lancashire, Cumberland, Yorkshire, Staffordshire, Cornish, Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Northumbrian and Durham accents. All these and more tongues were to be heard in a marked way; and not only that, but the families in each group gravitated together and formed a common bond. (Jack Lawson, 'A Man's Life', quoted in W. H. B. Court, *British Economic History 1870–1914: Commentary and Documents* (Cambridge, 1965), p. 97.)

Lawson also commented on the difference between the relatively settled older collieries in the east of the county and the mobile populations of the new collieries in the west: 'A new colliery or a new seam meant bigger money and there was always an emigration followed by the incoming of new people to take their place' (*ibid.*).

One of the main consequences of the intermingling of cultures within the British Isles was the rise of inter-ethnic hostility particularly in relation to Irish Catholics and, in the late nineteenth century, to Jews also.

Catholic Emancipation, which was a relatively minor reform proposal in some eyes, aroused strong feelings because it implied the entry of Catholic Irish into parliament. In the 1840s the Maynooth Grant issue became, in Harriet Martineau's words, 'the great political controversy of the day – the subject on which society is going mad' (quoted in E. R. Norman, *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England* (London, 1968), p. 23). 'No Popery' and hostility to new migrants became an explosive political mixture. In Stockport in 1842, where the proportion of Irish-born had risen from 7 per cent to 10 per cent, a large crowd carried an effigy of the Catholic parish priest through the Irish quarter and tore it to pieces. William Murphy, leader of the Protestant Electoral Union, surrounded by the bodyguard of 'Stalybridge lads', held a series of violent 'No Popery' meetings in 1867–8. During the 1868 general election at Stalybridge, Conservative party placards were headed

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which will you have to reign over you – will you suffer Mr Gladstone to destroy the supremacy of your sovereign and substitute the supremacy of the Pope? Sidebottom calls to English freemen to assert their rights. (Neville Kirk, 'Ethnicity, Class and Popular Toryism 1850–1870', in K. Lunn, *Hosts, Immigrants and Minorities* (London, 1980))

In 1868, English reaction to Irish sympathy for executed Fenian prisoners, known as the 'Manchester Martyrs', led to widespread rioting. The rise of the Home Rule movement in Ireland from the 1880s onwards led to a further intensification of ethnic rivalries throughout the British Isles.

Historians have become accustomed to thinking of the British Isles in terms of four national histories each of which could be dealt with separately in its own terms, English, Welsh, Scottish or Irish. As we have seen, however, there were at least two cultures in England, three in Wales, three in Scotland (four if we include Shetland and Orkney) and two in Ireland (or three with the Gaelic west). A source of additional complexity is the fact that in some areas these cultures overlapped, thus introducing problems arising from inter-ethnic rivalries. The influx of east European Jews in the 1880s was another factor in the situation. The early modern period (c. 1500–c. 1700) had been marked by heavy outmigration into Ireland and the American colonies from Britain. The modern period was characterised by large-scale movement of population into the industrial areas of Britain from Ireland and elsewhere. The history of the British Isles during this period resembles that of the United States more than is commonly realised. From this point of view the multi-ethnic character of modern Britain is a continuation of nineteenth-century trends.

There is, finally, the additional complication that the various cultures of the British Isles were an immense source of emigrants to North America, the United States as well as Canada, and to Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. This nineteenth-century migration was much less exclusively English than that of the seventeenth century. The Catholic Irish who had avoided emigration in earlier periods now came to accept emigration as an unavoidable, if unwelcome, necessity. The Scots also emigrated in large numbers from both Highlands and Lowlands. Only the Welsh who had the mines of south Wales as their 'New World' were not represented in proportion to their numbers. The new empire of the nineteenth century was very much the creation of the British Isles as a whole and as a consequence reflected the tensions of the cultural complex from which it originated.

From the late eighteenth century onwards the structure of English society changed radically under the impact of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. By the early twentieth century over four-fifths of a vastly increased population lived in towns, compared with one third in the mid-eighteenth century. The proportion of the population engaged in agriculture dropped to 5 per cent from well over 33 per cent earlier. In broad terms the continuing 'Industrial Revolution' is the most important fact with which the historian has to deal. It is not the only fact, however. The Act of Union with Ireland (1800) brought the complexities of Irish politics and society into the heart of the Westminster parliament, where they could not be ignored. Irish immigration into England also introduced ethnic problems, which were aggravated by a 'nativist' reaction in particular areas. 'Ireland' during this period became a new feature of the English political landscape at both the national and local level. There was also the fact of religious revival among all the Christian denominations. Though half the population remained uninterested in organised religion, the proportion of religious activists rose dramatically in the course of the century. The most noteworthy change was the rise of dissent from the position of a minority to numerical equality with the Established Church. Class feeling, religious consciousness and ethnic rivalries were interrelated poles around which much of English life revolved.

At the end of the Napoleonic wars the dominant culture was still that of the Anglican establishment, encompassing a wide variety of opinion and life-style. It was agreed by such influential spokesmen as Blackstone, Burke and Paley that an Established Church was essential for the preservation of social order. In the early nineteenth century, as in the eighteenth, membership of the Established Church was needed for full participation in politics, in the army and the learned professions. Anglican control of the universities and the great public schools led almost inevitably to this consequence. At Oxford, acceptance of the thirty-nine articles of the

Church of England was necessary for matriculation and at Cambridge, for admission to a degree.

As we have seen, during the eighteenth century, the conflict between the cultures of Church and dissent was a major theme of the history of the English empire, with victory going to the Church in England itself and to dissent in the American colonies. In England, during the nineteenth century, industrial and demographic expansion in 'the north' provided an opportunity of which the dissenting sects took more advantage than the Established Church. The towns of the West Riding were strongholds of nonconformity and in cities such as Birmingham, Liverpool, Leicester and Sheffield the city council came to be dominated by dissenters after the electoral reforms of the 1830s.

The attention of some historians has been concentrated in recent years upon the 'Making of the English Working Class'. In fact, however, it seems to have been the relative deprivation which the dissenters experienced that fuelled most of the agitation against the establishment during the 1820s and 1830s. The repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828 and the establishment of University College, London, in the same year testified to the new strength of the dissenters. It was followed by pressure for further political change which led eventually to the passing of the Reform Act of 1832. This in its turn led to a growing demand for the remedy of specific dissenting grievances, especially the payment of tithes, the levying of Church rates to pay for the upkeep of the fabric of the parish church, the legal requirement that dissenters should be married within a Church of the establishment and the continued exclusion of dissenters from Oxford and Cambridge. In 1833 dissenting leaders attacked the union of Church and State as unjust and unscriptural. In 1834 a dissenting conference of 400 delegates under the chairmanship of Edward Baines, a prominent Leeds nonconformist, demanded the disestablishment of the Church.

The animosity between the two cultures of Church and dissent dominated English politics throughout the nineteenth century. During a period of considerable industrial change it might have been expected that 'class conflict' would come to the fore. This was true of some areas during the late 1830s when the Chartist movement reached its peak. In general, however, sectarian animosity seems to have been far more important. In his *Autobiography* 'Mark Rutherford' commented that, 'Generally speaking, there were two shops of each trade; one of which was patronised by the Church and Tories, and another by the Dissenters and Whigs. The inhabitants were divided into two distinct camps – of the Church and Tory camp the other camp knew nothing' ('Mark Rutherford' (sc. W. H. White), *Autobiography* (London, 1981), p. 34). Hostility between Church and dissent broke out not infrequently into violence or near violence.

Figure 30. *Statue of Caractacus*
This statue of Caradoc (in Latin Caractacus) is of a mythical Briton.
In itself it symbolises the revival of 'Welshness' in industrial Britain.
Commissioned in London and carried out by an Irish artist in 1859 it
also illustrates the 'Britannic melting pot'.

At Newark the parson ordered the fire engine to be wheeled out to hose a dissenting preacher. Dissenting chapels continued to seek the obscurity of the back streets in some towns. In Cambridgeshire, dissenters were unacceptable as tenants on the estates of strongly Tory squires. There is no doubt that as England became more religious in the nineteenth century, in the sense that the power of organised religion grew, a sharper awareness of rivalry developed between the cultures of Church and dissent.

The Lancashire towns of Blackburn and Ashton may be taken as illustrating what the contrast between the cultures of Church and dissent meant in practice. It was said of Blackburn by a critic that

it is a thoroughgoing Tory community. Strong drink is the secret of its own and Britain's greatness; after that its heart has been given for long years to the Church and cockfighting. Be sober, lead a decent and respectable life and your genuine Blackburner will wax red at the mention of your name and dismiss you as 'a *** Dissenter'.

In general, Tory millowners were less interested in inculcating 'improving' virtues and more tolerant of the working man's beer. In the liberal areas of Blackburn, the most important mills were those of the Pilkington brothers, one of whom, James, was Liberal MP for the town. Here the headquarters of the Liberal party at election times were to be found in the Congregational chapel and the schoolroom, both built with Pilkington patronage. In Ashton and Stalybridge, where dissenters were in a majority, working men's educational classes and mutual improvement societies were popular, and temperance was much more of an issue. At Ashton the Mason works became a centre of moral improvement with 'library, baths, burial society, mothers class (Sunday devotional meetings), bowling green, gymnasium, brass band and weekly lectures'. The local Tory newspapers regarded all this munificence as an attempt to impose morality by authoritarian means. At a higher social level the passion of Lord Derby for whist, horse-racing and gambling offers an interesting contrast.

The contrast between the cultures of Church and dissent was, to a great extent, one between a largely rural 'south' and a heavily industrialised 'north'. Asa Briggs has remarked that 'a nineteenth century conflict between North and South was as much a leading theme of English as of American history' (*The Age of Improvement 1783–1867* (London, 1959), p. 50). As the dominant Toryism of Blackburn makes clear, however, the dominance of dissent in the north was never absolute. Cobden, spokesman for the 'Manchester School of Free Trade', was an Anglican. John Fielden, the Tory critic of the factory system, was MP for the northern town of Oldham, and owner of a cotton mill at Todmorden.

The north was industrialised England, stretching from Newcastle in the north-east to Birmingham in the west midlands. The textile industries

in Lancashire and Yorkshire, the metal industries in Birmingham, potteries at Stoke-on-Trent, and mining in the north-east were the centres of a continuing process of industrialisation. New towns made their appearance, such as Oldham in the first half of the century and Barrow and Middlesbrough in the second. The eighteenth-century ports of Bristol and Liverpool, once heavily dependent on the slave trade for their prosperity, found themselves functioning as outlets of the industrial north. Within this region there were large areas given over to agriculture and pastoral farming. The North Riding of Yorkshire and north Lancashire were mainly rural, but the main trend within the north was towards ever greater industrialisation on the basis of its rich deposits of coal and iron. In what was once a relatively unpopulated highland Zone, there were by the early twentieth century five large conurbations: Merseyside, Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield and Birmingham. In Northumberland, one in every four workers was a miner, one in five a worker in heavy industry. In Durham the proportion was one in three and one in four respectively.

'The south', with the large exception of London was, in contrast, dominated by great landed estates, whose landlords were, on the whole, Tory and Anglican. (The existence of Whig landlords does not alter the general validity of this picture.) In rural areas the expectation was that tenants would vote as their landlords wished. In Suffolk a witness declared that 'the individual feeling among farmers is that their vote is their landlords'. In 1841, a landlord stated that 'I did think that interference between a landlord with whose views you were acquainted and his tenants was not justifiable according to those laws of delicacy and propriety which I consider binding in such cases.' Another advised his tenants to vote 'in such a manner as should appear to them to be right and according to good conscience and as most likely to uphold that Church in which the purest doctrines of our religion are taught in the best manner'. In 1831 the duke of Northumberland 'desired' of his tenants to sign a petition against the Reform Bill, asking to know the names of those who did not. In return for rent reductions in bad times, landlords expected some recognition of their generosity at election times. As Sir Frederick Pollock put it in his discussion of the Land Laws,

The landlord in return expects a certain amount of deference and compliance in various matters from his tenants. Not only does the farmer meet him halfway on questions of shooting rights, and allow free passage to the hunt, but his political support of the landlord is not infrequently reckoned on with as much confidence as the performance of the covenants and conditions of the tenancy itself. In the case of holdings from year to year it may be not unfairly said that being of the landlord's political party is often a tacit condition of the tenancy. (F. Pollock, *The Land Laws* (London, 1883), pp. 150–1)

An attempt to identify a distinctive ideology of northern dissent would need to take into account such figures as Samuel Smiles and John Bright. Though born in Scotland, Smiles lived in Leeds from 1838 to 1858. His best-selling book, *Self Help*, which had sold a quarter of a million copies by 1905, put forward the self-made man as a praiseworthy social ideal. His heroes were the innovators and engineers of the new northern industrial society, Wedgwood, Brindley and Stephenson, whose success he thought could be emulated at a humbler level by the average working man. Thrift and temperance were habits which could enable working men to become capitalists themselves. 'A glass of beer', he wrote, 'is equal to forty five shillings a year. This sum will insure a man's life for a hundred and thirty pounds payable at death or placed in a savings bank, it would amount to a hundred pounds in twenty years.' A man with savings in hand could 'boldly look the world in the face . . . He can dictate his own terms. He can neither be bought nor sold. He can look forward to an old age of comfort and happiness.'

John Bright (1811–89), son of a Rochdale millowner, began his political career in 1830 with a speech advocating temperance. In 1840 he fought a successful campaign at Rochdale against the imposition of Church rate upon dissenters. His later denunciations of the establishment cannot be separated from his dissenting background. His view of English history derived from the Puritans of the seventeenth century. He thought Milton was 'the greatest man who had ever lived'. In 1866 he wrote to a friend that 'blows must be struck from this historical standpoint. Our forefathers thought so also, 200 years ago.' He attacked the southern aristocracy. 'The [Anti-Corn Law] League is the foe of aristocratic injustice and the State Church is the creature and tool of the aristocracy.' Bright's radicalism was not typical of all dissenters (the Wesleyans were always more conservative), but his views found a home in the Liberal party which was very much the party of the north against the south.

Puritanism, as the widespread influence of Smiles and Bright shows, was a key element in this northern culture. Bright found Shakespeare unfit to read and only came round to accepting novels after a good deal of heart-searching. Methodists, when in power locally, were likely to suppress the theatre. Fiction was banned from the Methodist school at Woodhouse Green near Leeds. Novels which did enter a Methodist household were described as 'the deceitful bakemeats of some huxtering heathen smuggled into a Levite's tent'. It was such attitudes as these which Matthew Arnold was to criticise in his *Culture and Anarchy* (1869).

If dissent found its spokesmen in such figures as John Bright and Samuel Smiles, the establishment found an eloquent defender

in Benjamin Disraeli. Disraeli (1804–81), of Bohemian temperament, middle-class background and Jewish origins, was an unlikely candidate for such a role, but his success was greater than that of a not dissimilar 'outsider', Edmund Burke. Disraeli's opportunity came in 1846 in the parliamentary debate over the Corn Laws. He launched a fierce attack on the 'school of Manchester', of which Cobden and Bright were the prime representatives. He defended the aristocracy on the ground of history. England possessed a territorial constitution and it was the land which bore the burdens of 'the revenues of the Church, the administration of justice, and the estate of the poor'. He saw his aim, he said later, as 'to uphold the aristocratic settlement of this country. That is the only question at stake however manifold the forms it assumes.' The aristocracy, in his view, was 'the only security for self government, the only barrier against that centralising system which has taken root in other countries'. It was not surprising that he should sympathise with the 'aristocratic' south during the American Civil War.

In an industrial age, Disraeli waxed eloquent on the joys of rural life. In 1860 he held a summer fête on his small estate of Hughenden (bought with a loan from his patron Lord George Bentinck in 1846 as an entrée into the world of the squirearchy).

There are 100 school children, [he wrote] as many farmers with their wives and all the county families for ten miles around – Sir George and Lady Dashwood, Colonel and Mrs. Fane, Sir Anthony and Lady Rothschild and a great assemblage of squires and clergymen. Lord Tredegar who never forgets that I made him a peer sent me a buck. They feasted in the open air and danced until sunset amid trees that were planted in the reign of Queen Anne and when Bolingbroke was Secretary of State.

Later he wrote to a friend, 'We have realised a romance we have been many years meditating; we have restored the house to what it was before the Civil Wars and we have made a garden of terraces in which cavaliers might roam and saunter with their lady loves.' Disraeli's view of English history was clearly very different from that of John Bright. In his Young England days before 1846, Disraeli had admired Laud and Strafford, and this Tory view of history remained an important element in conservative perceptions of the past. In 1910, when the constitutional position of the peerage was under attack, a defender wrote how 'In 1641 the English House of Commons abolished the Second Chamber and the House of Commons became the greatest tyrant to the democracy of England that there has been seen.' In contrast, the 'Whig' interpretation of Stuart history in which Laud and Strafford were the villains of the piece found a more sympathetic audience among the dissenters of the north.

Disraeli, though a self-made man himself, was no admirer of meritoc-
racy. He criticised Gladstone for introducing competitive examinations
into the Civil Service and when he was in power himself he wrote, 'I want
a man of the world, and of birth, breeding, culture and station to be the
chief of the Civil Service Commission so that if any absurd or pedantic
schemes of qualification are put before him he may integrate and modify
them and infuse them with a necessary degree of commonsense.'

Disraeli's political career spanned the years of greatest crisis for the
establishment. It began in the 1830s when to an ambitious young politi-
cian like Disraeli the future seemed to be with the Whigs. It continued
in the 1840s when he became identified with opposition to the policies
of the Peelite leadership of the Tory party. In 1845 Disraeli attacked the
renewal of the Maynooth Grant. In 1846 he remained with the majority
of the Tory party after Peel decided to repeal the Corn Laws. For the next
two decades the establishment was on the defensive until Disraeli led it
to victory in the general election of 1874.

What requires explanation is how the establishment managed to sur-
vive, in spite of the rising power of dissent. To churchmen of the 1830s
the outlook for the establishment seemed gloomy. The 1832 Reform Act
appeared as the first step in a process of revolutionary change, and the
disendowment measures which the Whig government proposed to take
with respect to the Church of Ireland had obvious implications for the
Church of England. That the establishment did survive during the crit-
ical years of the 1830s was due in large measure to four factors. In the
first place, the Whig leaders were by no means united on the issue and
one of the ablest of them, Edward Stanley, resigned on the Irish Church
issue. More important, perhaps, were the fears of social and political rev-
olution aroused by the Chartist movement during the late 1830s. The
violent rhetoric of the Chartist leaders and the rising at Newport in 1839
played into the hands of the defenders of the establishment. Thirdly,
the dissenters themselves were divided. Wesleyan Methodists, who were
the largest of the dissenting bodies, kept clear of advocating disestablish-
ment. Fourthly, what appeared to be the advance of 'Popery' encouraged
the cultivation of good relations between evangelical churchmen and their
counterparts in the world of dissent. Disestablishment did not go away as
an issue, however, and during the middle years of the century it was kept
alive by radical dissenters under the leadership of Edward Miall, a for-
mer nonconformist minister, who founded the British anti-state Church
association, later known as the Liberation Society.

Though it makes good sense of much of English history during this
period to see it in terms of a clash of two cultures, English involvement
in the affairs of the British Isles cannot be left out of account. Ireland in

Figure 31. *Statue of Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658)*
It was not until the last decade of the nineteenth century that this statue
of Oliver Cromwell was erected outside parliament. The decision to do
so was a victory for the forces of English dissent within the Liberal party.
Cromwell was a symbol of a non-Anglican view of English history. For
Irish nationalists, however, he remained a religious fanatic who slaugh-
tered Catholics at Drogheda in 1649.

particular came to occupy a more central place than had hitherto been the case. After the Act of Union there was direct Irish representation at Westminster. The fact that Irish Catholics were excluded from membership of the House of Commons despite Catholic forty-shilling freeholders being able to vote fuelled the flame of constitutional agitation during the 1820s. Catholic Emancipation was looked upon as the first step in the overthrow of the constitution. During the 1830s Whig proposals to reform the Church of Ireland led to cries of 'the Church in Danger' within England itself. During the 1840s, the crisis over the Maynooth Grant question and the challenge presented by the Irish Famine led to serious divisions within the governing Conservative party. The long-term effect of the Act of Union was to thrust Irish issues upon the attention of successive Westminster governments, which found it difficult to treat them on their own merits, irrespective of their implications for England.

In April 1848, the following appeared in *The Economist*:

Thank God we are Saxons! Flanked by the savage Celt on the one side and the flighty Gaul on the other – the one a slave to his passions, the other a victim to the theories of the hour – we feel deeply grateful from our inmost hearts that we belong to a race, which if it cannot boast the flowing fancy of one of its neighbours, nor the brilliant *esprit* of the other has an ample compensation in [a] social, slow, reflective phlegmatic temperament.

The 'racial' interpretation of Irish history appealed to many in the nineteenth century and is still not quite dead even in the best academic circles. As an explanation of the complexities of Irish history, however, it is quite inadequate. In Ireland, as in England, the concept of culture provides a better source of enlightenment as to why Irish history in the nineteenth century took the course it did.

In the late eighteenth century, Ireland, like England, was a society dominated by the landed estate. In any particular locality the inhabitants identified themselves as being within the jurisdiction of a particular landlord or his agent. Estates were made up of 'townlands' which formed the basic rental unit, but, though the townland provided the framework for day-to-day living, it was the landlord or his agent who made the crucial decisions about a particular tenant's future. The 'Protestant ascendancy' was an ascendancy of landlords. The Irish parliament was dominated by the landlord, or the borough representatives which they chose. At the parliamentary level, political differences related to such matters as the 'Absentee Tax' which smaller landlords periodically proposed to levy upon larger, absentee magnates. The siting of roads or canals, important for the prosperity of an estate, was another issue which politics

might decide. The perquisite of political power included patronage in the Church, the army and the administration.

The history of Ireland in the nineteenth century thus revolves by and large around the decline and fall of the Protestant ascendancy and its key institution, the landed estate. The 'Golden Age' of the ascendancy is frequently associated with 'Georgian Ireland'. The demise of the Irish parliament, brought about by the Act of Union of 1800, is thought to mark the beginning of the end. In fact, the power of the ascendancy reinforced by urban elements was to last for a century after the Act of Union. The landlords continued to enjoy considerable local power and influence until the Local Government Act of 1898 did away with the Grand Jury. In many respects, it may be argued the ascendancy lasted in Northern Ireland until 1972 when the last of the old-style landlords, Chichester Clark, finally gave way to a businessman, Brian Faulkner.

During the course of the nineteenth century, the balance of power within the ascendancy shifted in favour of the north. Industrial growth was centred on Belfast which rose in population from 37,000 in 1821 to nearly 350,000 by 1901. The population of Dublin which had been 336,000 in 1821 had risen to only 448,000 in 1901 and much of this increase had taken place without any industrialisation. Dublin remained a centre of consumption while Belfast became a centre of production in linen spinning and weaving and in shipbuilding. In Ulster by the end of the century there were 900,000 Protestants, of whom 670,000 lived in Belfast and its hinterland. Within a radius of about 65 miles around Belfast, Protestants amounted to over 75 per cent of the population. Nearly half the factories in Ireland and over 75 per cent of factory workers were concentrated in the north-east. In the three southern provinces, Protestants, mostly episcopalian, amounted to only 10 per cent of the population, mainly concentrated around Dublin and Cork. The northern Protestants were divided almost equally between episcopalian and Presbyterian but the old animosities between the two groups had died away to a large extent in an environment of industrialism and in the face of a revived Catholicism.

In the south the influence of such magnates as the marquess of Lansdowne and the duke of Devonshire remained. More and more, however, power shifted to the Catholic middle class which found a charismatic leader in Daniel O Connell, lawyer, brewer, banker and landowner. Ireland is often described as a 'peasant society' but this vague concept tends to obscure the complexity of Irish social structure. Catholics were underrepresented in the middle class in proportion to their numbers but they cannot be ignored. It has been estimated that in Cork and Waterford

they made up one third of all merchants. In 1861, the first year that statistics are available, Catholics formed roughly a third of the medical and legal professions. They also formed a high proportion of 'strong farmers'. Finally, but not least importantly, the Catholic clergy seem to have been drawn in large measure from the middle class. In 1826 a student at Maynooth declared: 'I conceive my parents to belong to that state of life which we call the middle class of society; and with regard to the generality of students at Maynooth it is my opinion that their parents belong to the same order of persons.' By 'the middle class' he went on to explain that he meant those persons in commerce or agriculture 'who can live independently and who, perhaps, could provide for their children a situation that could be more lucrative than the priesthood'. The president of Maynooth also stated in 1826 that 'our students are generally the sons of farmers who must be comfortable in order to meet the expenses I have already mentioned: of tradesmen, shopkeepers: and not a very small proportion of them are the children of opulent merchants and rich farmers and graziers'. The rise in status of the Catholic clergy during the nineteenth century was symptomatic of the general rise of a Catholic middle class.

Though denied the right to sit in parliament in 1795, the Catholic middle class had held aloof from the rebellion of 1798. Archbishop Troy of Dublin declared in 1793 that 'society implies different classes and orders of men, necessarily subordinate and dependent'. In 1793, Bishop Coppinger of Cloyne and Ross asked, 'How can there be cultivation where there are no tillers? And where shall you find tillers if all become gentlemen?'

Rank and property must go hand in hand, the inequality of both in every civilised country must be as various as the talents of men. Were every individual in the land possessed at this day of an equal share of property, a lapse of twelve months would exhibit numerous gradations. The industrious, the thrifty, the honest, the temperate would soon surpass the idle, the squanderers, and the licentious.

It was anticipated that loyalty would be rewarded after the passing of the Act of Union which the Catholic bishops supported on the understanding that Catholics would be eligible to sit in the House of Commons. In the event, it took two more decades before O Connell, who himself had opposed the 1798 rebellion, was able to force the issue after a good deal of agitation. In 1828, O Connell defeated a popular Protestant landowner in a Clare by-election and the British government finally gave way on the issue of Catholic Emancipation, in the teeth of opposition from the ascendancy. 'Catholic Emancipation' was a success for the Catholic middle class in Ireland comparable to that which the dissenters obtained in

1832, in England. As with 1832, however, the Catholic victory of 1829 left the landlords in possession of much of the field.

Though it would be easy to press the analogy too far it may be argued that the perceptions of the northern English dissenter paralleled those of the Catholic middle class in Ireland. Both groups felt themselves to be excluded from the full life of their society. O Connell's Repeal programme of 1832, which called for the abolition of tithes, and taxes such as Church rates and vestry cess was similar to the reform programme of the dissenters. Like the dissenters, the Irish Catholic middle class objected to the control which the Established Church exercised over higher education and, like them, they established their own university, Newman's Catholic University in Dublin in the one case, and Owens College, Manchester in the other. In both groups there were strongly 'democratic' sentiments. Tocqueville, on a visit to Ireland in 1835, commented about the political outlook of the higher clergy: 'The feelings expressed were extremely democratic. Distrust and hatred of the great landlords; love of the people and confidence in them. Bitter memories of past oppression. An air of exaltation at present of approaching victory.' He might very well have found a similar outlook among the leaders of northern English dissent. Though poles apart in theology, the Liberation Society of dissenting England and the Catholic National Association of Ireland saw eye-to-eye on the question of disestablishment and agreed to work with one another.

Links between English dissent and the Irish middle class were expanded upon in a letter from John Bright which was read out at a meeting of the National Association in Dublin in 1864. Bright applauded their efforts at land reform and indeed urged them to go further. He went on to say with regard to the State Church:

[it] is an institution so evil and so odious under the circumstances of your country that it makes one almost hopeless of Irish freedom that Irishmen have borne it so long. The whole Liberal Party in Great Britain will, doubtless, join with you in demanding the removal of a wrong which has no equal in the character of a national insult in any other civilised and Christian country in the world.

(Bright, however, opposed Home Rule in 1886.)

In 1800, there were three cultures in Ireland, episcopalian, Presbyterian and Catholic, each with its own tradition of Christianity, its own ethnic identity and its own version of Irish history. By mid-century, joined by a common fear of resurgent 'Popery', episcopalians (of English background) and Presbyterians (of Scottish background) were tending to merge their differences under the common label 'Protestant', which had hitherto been confined to episcopalians. Among the episcopalians,

evangelicalism gained ground. Among the Presbyterians, 'Old Light' unitarianism lost influence in the face of a militant 'New Light' movement, led by Henry Cooke of Belfast. Among the Catholics, Moderates such as Daniel Murray, archbishop of Dublin, were succeeded by Ultramontanes, whose acknowledged leader was Cardinal Paul Cullen.

Another major cause for the continued division between Catholic and Protestant cultures in Ireland must be sought in their contrasting experiences during the years of famine 1845–9. The Protestant north, where oats rather than potatoes were the main element of popular diet, was spared from famine when the potato crop failed. It was the Catholic small farming and labouring classes in the south and west, heavily dependent upon the potato, which bore the main brunt of famine. As Professor Joseph Lee has shown (in *The Modernisation of Irish Society 1848–1918* (1973)) the labouring class, overwhelmingly Catholic, was decimated by disease and starvation during these years. By 1847, small farmers, also Catholic, who had managed to survive three years of potato failure, were forced to emigrate in large numbers if they were not to suffer the fate of the labourers. By 1851, Ireland had lost a quarter of its population by emigration or by death, a social tragedy which had its greatest impact upon the Catholic poor. Memory of the Famine became part of the *mentalité* of Catholic culture, differentiating it from that of Protestant Ireland. It was a memory which many emigrants took with them to the New World, where in due course it provided an emotional reservoir for Irish Catholic nationalism.

In the mid-eighteenth century, Wales was in many ways a smaller version of Ireland, its population of about half a million being roughly an eighth of the population of Ireland. Like Ireland, it was a society of landed estates, whose proprietors, or their agents, controlled the political and economic life of their area. There was also an Established Church which was cut off from full communication with the mass of the people by linguistic and social barriers. The cleavage between the episcopalian ascendancy and the great majority was not as sharp in Wales as it was in Ireland, since it was not based upon recent conquest. It was there nonetheless. When one of the Wynn family was thrown from his horse after a hunt, the event coincided with a petition at a Methodist prayer meeting: 'O Arglwydd cwympa Ddiawl Mawr y Wynnstay' ('O Lord, cast down the Great Devil of Wynnstay'). Dissent became the religion of most Welsh religious activists much as a 'reformed' Catholicism became the creed of the Irish majority, and perhaps for much the same reasons. Dissenting ministers, like the Catholic clergy, were able to express openly, or at least to symbolise, the resentments which fear of eviction kept concealed among the tenantry. Political representation, as in Ireland, was in

the hands of the ascendancy and the survival of the Test and Corporation Acts on the statute book until 1828 served as a reminder that the dissenting majority was excluded from full participation in national life.

Given these political and social circumstances, it is not surprising that there should have been some reaction in Wales to the revolutions in America and France. Two of the most prominent individuals involved were Richard Price, the Welsh-born minister of a congregation at Stoke Newington, and David Williams, a friend of Benjamin Franklin. Price's pamphlet *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty* (1776) was an attempt to place American resistance in a wide context of political rights and it was his sermon in 1789, praising the French revolution, which provoked Edmund Burke's *Reflections*. David Williams was closely involved with the Girondins during the French revolution and after their fall he returned to England. Radical ideas were also put forward by the London-Welsh society Gwyneddigion, whose most prolific member was Edward Williams ('Iolo Morganwg'). In Wales itself, however, there was no equivalent of the United Irishmen. When a French landing took place at Fishguard in 1797 it aroused confusion and consternation rather than enthusiasm. To some Welsh Baptists the French revolution presaged the coming of Anti-Christ. There were food riots during the war years as well as anti-militia and anti-press gang riots but these were local demonstrations rather than an indication of widespread revolutionary sympathies. The hatred of the crowd was directed against farmers and corn dealers rather than the landowning classes.

The attitude of dissenting ministers in Wales towards the French revolution was similar to that of most of the Catholic clergy in Ireland. Other parallels may also be drawn. Both groups looked upon popular oral culture as the enemy of Christian morality. In 1791 the great Methodist reformer, Thomas Charles of Bala, wrote to a friend: 'No harps but the *golden* harps of which St John speaks, have been played in this neighbourhood for several months past. The craft is not only in danger but entirely destroyed and abolished.' In another letter he wrote: 'The revival of religion has put an end to all the merry meetings for dancing, singing with the harp, and every kind of sinful mirth, which used to be so prevalent amongst young people here' (quoted in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 55). Such statements recall episcopal denunciations in Ireland of 'all unbecoming, disorderly and irreligious assemblages of people at Patrons' from the 1780s onwards.

Another resemblance between Wales and Ireland lay in the resentment felt over the payment of tithes to support what was regarded as the Church of a minority. In Ireland, the expectations aroused by Catholic

Emancipation in 1829 had not been fulfilled. The result was the Tithe War of the 1830s in which the Catholic clergy of some areas took a prominent part. In Wales, discontent was aroused by an act of 1836, which in the name of tithe commutation seemed to be raising the obligations of the tithe payers. An unpopular issue was made less tolerable by economic distress. The 'Rebecca Riots' which broke out in 1839 may be seen as the Welsh equivalent of the Irish Tithe War though what finally put the match to the fire of rural discontent was not payment of tithes but the exaction of tolls upon parish roads. (The title 'Rebecca' was said to derive from the scriptural passage declaring that 'Rebecca should possess the gates of her enemies.') Tolls levied at a growing number of toll gates acted as an internal tax system which lay heaviest upon hard-pressed small farmers taking their produce to market. The area originally affected was on the Carmarthen–Pembroke border but it spread in 1842 to other counties. The New Poor Law workhouses were also an object of attack. The Rebecca Riots were firmly put down by the government, but major concessions over the turnpike system removed this particular source of discontent. Tithes still remained a major grievance, as was to be shown in the 'Tithe Wars' of 1886–91.

The course of the rural history of Wales thus clearly offers some parallels with that of rural Ireland during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In south Wales, however, from the 1760s, changes were already in train which were to make the counties of Monmouth and Glamorgan one of the most heavily industrialised areas of the British Isles. The booming market for iron during the Seven Years War provided the take-off for the exploitation of Welsh coal and iron at Wrexham in the north as well as Merthyr in the south. The American and French wars and the growing demand for steam power led to further expansion. By 1815 the south Wales iron industry was producing one third of the total of British iron production. Barry and Swansea began to grow as ports during this period, though Cardiff and Newport were still undeveloped. In 1801, the population of the counties of Glamorgan and Monmouth amounted to a little over 100,000 in a population of over half a million. By 1901, the two counties accounted for over half the total population of 2 million. The north-east of Ireland underwent considerable industrialisation during the nineteenth century but the proportion of the Irish population involved was never more than a quarter of the total.

The consequences of industrialisation were very important for Wales since it saved the country from the massive emigration which took place in Ireland. South Wales became a melting pot in which Welsh, English and Irish were intermingled, though the great majority was Welsh. There was no equivalent of the Irish Famine, no mass emigration to America

under conditions of great hardship and no Welsh equivalent of the intense involvement which Irish-Americans often displayed in the affairs of their homeland. There was thus no counterpart in Welsh history of Fenianism. A movement for Welsh Home Rule did make its appearance in the 1880s, but its strength lay in the rural areas of west Wales. When it came to the point of setting up an independent Home Rule party on the Irish model the industrial cities of south Wales stood in the way. The parallels with Ireland existed but the industrial sector of Welsh society was much stronger than its Irish counterpart.

There were, indeed, two cultures in nineteenth-century Wales. In the Welsh-speaking counties of the west, wage-labour was still relatively uncommon. The social structure in many ways resembled that of parts of the west of Ireland, with its division into large farms (*lle mawr*), small farms (*lle bach*) and cottagers (*pobol tai bach*, people of the little houses). This was a heavily localised world in which there was a good deal of interdependence. Small dairy farmers needed the services of the bull, which only large farms could provide. In return they provided help at harvest time. Cottagers paid with their labour for the potato land which the farmers provided. The gentry, *y gwyr mawr* (the great people), constituted a distinctive sector of society. The problems facing Welsh rural society were related to such questions as security of tenure, rent increases and survival during a time of bad harvests and the price of beef cattle and salted casked butter on which most depended for cash. This was the world of Welsh nonconformity. The Established Church found its support among the gentry, and the wage labourers of the border counties.

This culture was in sharp contrast with that of the industrialised, partially English-speaking counties of the south-east, Glamorgan, Monmouth and east Carmarthen, which were to grow in importance throughout the nineteenth century. In due course the ports of Newport, Swansea, Barry and above all Cardiff were to become the Welsh equivalents of the industrial towns of northern England. In the first half of the nineteenth century signs of industrial unrest had already made their appearance in the south. Chartism enjoyed considerable support, notably at Newport, where John Frost led a Chartist rising. During the 1820s and 1830s a secret society known as the 'Scotch Cattle' operated in the iron-mining and coal-mining villages of Monmouthshire. 'Boom' conditions from mid-century on, however, brought prosperity to the south, whose main problem was that of absorbing the large numbers of immigrants who flocked to the mining villages of the Rhondda. It was the grievances of rural Wales that provided the impetus which lay behind the rise of Welsh Liberalism. Disestablishment, tithes and evictions, not

trade unions, payment in truck and strikes, were the issues on which Welsh Liberalism was to be based.

The influence of the landlords had survived the 1832 Reform Act in most Welsh counties and with them the privileges of the Established Church. In Denbighshire and Merioneth, the Wynn family retained the political power which it had enjoyed since the eighteenth century. Anti-ascendancy feeling had been expressed in 1859 in Merioneth, where an attempt to unseat a Wynn had been followed by a number of politically motivated evictions. The 1868 election, in which a wider franchise based upon the 1867 Reform Act was in operation, made possible another attack. In Denbighshire, Sir Watkin Wynn retained his seat but the Whig candidate, with whom he had agreed to 'share' the county, was defeated. The 1868 election marked the beginning of a trend which left the Liberals totally dominant in Wales. In 1885, there were thirty Welsh Liberals in the Commons and only four Welsh Conservatives.

The political pressures which led to this change came largely from the dissenting Churches, which in 1851 numbered nearly 400,000 compared with just over 100,000 attending the Established Church. Dissent, like Catholicism in Ireland, was the religion of the great majority. Hence, grievances such as Church control of education in rural areas were felt to be particularly galling. New fervour was added by the religious revival of 1859 which was a 'Year of Grace' in Wales as it was in Ulster. The growth of Tractarianism within the Established Church also made 'No Popery' an issue. The most significant change, however, was the attempt to bring temperance into politics. The advocates of temperance reform looked upon alcohol as the main cause of social problems and they aimed to control its use by legislative action instead of moral persuasion, as had been the case earlier in the century. It was during the middle decades of the century that temperance together with Sabbatarianism and dis-establishment came to be seen by many Welsh Liberals as expressing a particularly 'Welsh' outlook on life.

Though it is tempting to speak of nineteenth-century Scotland as a single unit, there were at least three 'Scotlands' during this period, each with their own distinctive characteristics. The Highlands (including the Hebrides) still retained their own individuality. The other two regions were the eastern and western Lowlands, which, as industrialisation gathered pace in the west, became divided into a largely rural east and a largely industrial west. For most of the century, the east maintained its traditional political, legal and cultural dominance. Edinburgh the capital was on the east coast. Three of the four Scottish universities, Edinburgh, St Andrews and Aberdeen were in the east. The best land, which was now being 'improved' under the impact of the 'Agricultural Revolution',

was also in the east. Edinburgh was very much the centre of the Scottish Enlightenment and though Adam Smith was a professor at Glasgow for a time he soon settled at Kirkcaldy, within reach of Edinburgh and his friends. The *Edinburgh Review*, drawing much of its inspiration from the Enlightenment, provided intellectual leadership for the reform movement before and after 1832. (Thomas Babington Macaulay was a member for Edinburgh from 1839 to 1847 and 1851 to 1856.) It was not until the 1880s, after the Reform Acts of 1884 and 1885, that the west was in a position to exert the political power to which its economic and demographic growth entitled it. It was then that Glasgow showed itself to be a centre of Chamberlainite radicalism, aiming to assert itself against the 'Whiggish' east. If the history of England can be seen as a struggle between north and south, that of Scotland during this period revolves around the rivalry between west and east.

The division between the Gaelic-speaking Highlands and the English-speaking Lowlands continued to be a major cultural divide. In the course of the nineteenth century, however, the significance of the Highlands within a general Scottish context began to decline. In 1801 the Highland counties contained nearly a fifth of the population. By 1901, even though some counties grew in population, this had dropped to 8 per cent and by 1939 to 6.5 per cent. The balance shifted inexorably in favour of the urbanised and industrialised Lowlands. By 1901 the population of the western Lowlands, with the Glasgow conurbation as their centre, rose from one fifth to just under half the total population of 4.5 million.

The history of the Highlands during this period closely resembled that of the west of Ireland, in so far as it was marked by a rapid growth of population, famine and heavy emigration. Like Ireland, Highland society became heavily dependent on the potato, a change in diet which made it possible to feed a larger population. In some parts of the Highlands the production of kelp, an alkaline ash made from burnt seaweed, became a major local industry and a source of temporary prosperity. With the coming of peace in 1815, however, the linen, glass and soap industries were able to turn to cheaper Spanish alkalis. The economic and demographic problems of the Highlands were now intensified and whereas at an earlier period landlords had opposed emigration they now began to encourage it. Estates were turned over to the more profitable activity of sheep farming. It was during these years that the notorious 'Highland Clearances' took place on the Sutherland estate where Patrick Sellar was the agent from 1810 to 1819. Sellar also acquired an estate of his own in Morvern, when the spendthrift sixth duke of Argyll was forced to sell part of his property. Emigration now became a way of life in the Highlands, whether as the result of conscious decision or as a consequence

of eviction. Many went to Nova Scotia, Cape Breton Island or Prince Edward Island. Others made their way to Glasgow, where in such towns as Greenock there were Gaelic-speaking congregations.

The failure of the potato crop first in 1837 and then again in the blight-ridden years after 1846 added a further turn of the screw. There was no equivalent in the Highlands of the Irish Famine, however. The authorities were able to cope with the shortage more successfully, in part because the affected areas could be reached by steamship. The numbers of those affected were much smaller and the landlords, or most of them, seem to have played a more generous role than their counterparts in Ireland. Though emigration was heavy, the allocation of so much land to sheep farming meant that there was a chronic shortage of land. Beneath the surface there was a good deal of resentment among the crofters against landlords and graziers, which flared up into open hostility in the early 1880s. The crofters were hard-pressed in the lean years following 1879, and they turned to the example of the Irish League in an attempt to gain security of tenure. In 1882, the Highland Land League was founded and in 1885 five crofter candidates were returned to parliament. The result was the Crofters Act of 1886 giving some measure of security on the lines of the Irish Land Act of 1881. There was to be no equivalent in Scotland of the decline of the landed ascendancy in Ireland or Wales, however. The great landed estates survived, more often than not as large-scale game preserves.

Profound cultural changes also occurred in the Highlands as a consequence of the missionary activities of the evangelicals. What the Methodists achieved in Wales and what evangelical missionaries attempted in the west of Ireland, 'the Free Church of Scotland' accomplished in the Highlands. Gaelic oral culture gave way to a biblically orientated literacy, also in Gaelic. Of the 474 ministers who left the Church at the 'Disruption' of 1843, 101 used the Gaelic language in public worship. A ship run by the evangelicals, the *Breadalbane*, which was used to ferry ministers between the islands, played a prominent part in famine relief work in the late 1840s. The temperance movement and the strict Sabbath took root. Despite the survival of Gaelic, it may be argued that the Lowlands radically transformed the culture of the Highlands. By a curious turn of events, while this was taking place, a romanticised version of Highland culture was making headway in the Lowlands. In the wake of the Ossianic forgeries of James Macpherson and of the novels of Walter Scott, the cult of the Highlander achieved extraordinary success. The newly invented kilt and tartan were taken over by Lowland families as emblems of ethnic identity. For many, Scottish Romanticism replaced Scottish Enlightenment.

In the Highlands, conflict of interest between grazier and crofter created a situation which in many ways resembled that of the west of Ireland. In the rural areas of the eastern Lowlands, a very different social structure developed, under the impact of the Agricultural Revolution. During the 'Age of Improvement', which lasted well into the nineteenth century, changes occurred which involved the disappearance of traditional rural units. The shared farming arrangements of 'runrig', which in some ways resembled the strip system of the middle ages, gave way to individual farms run by hired labour. In the Lothians, labour was provided by the 'hind' whose family were expected to serve as additional helpers ('bondagers'). In the north-east the use of unmarried labourers, hired for six months at a time, was more common and barrack-like bothies were built to accommodate them. One Aberdeenshire labourer complained that 'Feeing markets [sc. hiring fairs] always remind me of the old days when slaves were bought and sold by their general physical appearance, as one would buy a horse at St. Sair's Fair. I myself have had my wrists examined by farmers, to see what appearance of strength there was about them.'

The political reforms of 1832 had little effect upon this social structure. The Reform Act increased the Scottish electorate from c. 5,000 to c. 60,000 but the main beneficiaries were the urban and rural middle class. In the counties, the electorate remained very small, most notoriously in the case of Sutherland, which with under 150 electors was in effect a rotten borough for the duke of Sutherland. Until the 1880s Liberalism tended to reflect the interests of the lairds, graziers and wealthy small-town merchants of the east, who were against 'landlordism' but hostile to trade unions. Profound economic and social changes were taking place in the western Lowlands but for the most part the Liberal party was controlled by the 'Whiggish' east. The Conservative party was the party of the large landowners and the Established Church but the Liberals, though less conservative on some issues, also had landlords among their leaders. In the Lothians, the Elliotts, wealthy 'Liberal' landlords, contested elections with their traditional rivals, the Douglases of Buccleuch, as they had done since the fifteenth century. The wealthy landlord Lord Rosebery, with his estate near Edinburgh, became leader of the Liberal party. It was against this type of landlord dominance that the crofters rebelled in the 1880s.

The social conservatism of eastern Liberalism was revealed perhaps most clearly in attitudes towards education. The traditional view of Scottish education had been that it encouraged the rise of a 'Scottish democracy' since the parochial system placed no obstacle in the way of a 'lad of parts' from passing from local school to university. In practice,

fee-paying schools of an exclusively middle-class character made their appearance during the nineteenth century. When the Edinburgh Academy was founded in 1824, the reformer Henry Cockburn commented that this would be 'an important day for education in Scotland, in reference to the middle and upper classes'. In 1870, the charitable endowments of Edinburgh hospitals were taken over by the Merchant Companies to found five fee-paying schools catering for the middle class. In both town and countryside the evidence suggests a hardening of class boundaries. In nineteenth-century Edinburgh there was a sharp social divide between the New Town occupied by the professional middle class and the 'colonies' of artisan dwellings to the north and east. Educational arrangements merely reflected this fact of Edinburgh life.

In due course, the dominance of the east was to be challenged by an expanding west. The 'rise of the west' had its origins in the late eighteenth century with the establishment of cotton-spinning factories in New Lanark, Catrine and elsewhere. But it was not until the 1830s that the growth of heavy industry on a significant scale began to take place. In 1801, the population of Glasgow was still only 77,000 inhabitants compared to Edinburgh's 83,000. In 1881, Glasgow with 587,000 inhabitants was almost double the size of Edinburgh, with its 295,000 inhabitants. In 1911, Greater Glasgow had reached the million mark. Edinburgh, with 401,000, had less than half Glasgow's population. More was involved than the growth of Glasgow itself since it was surrounded by a network of substantial industrial towns, Hamilton, Paisley, Kilmarnock, Greenock, Dumbarton and others, which helped to make it the Scottish equivalent of Birmingham. The relative decline of Edinburgh was comparable with that of Dublin in relation to Belfast. The counties of Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire, which together had well over a million inhabitants in 1881, were the Scottish equivalent of Glamorgan and Monmouth. In 1830 the Lowland iron industry produced 40,000 tons of iron. By 1844 this had risen to c. 400,000 tons. In 1855 Scotland was producing a quarter of the total output of the United Kingdom. The Bairds factory at Gartsherrie was the largest iron works in the world after Dowlais in south Wales.

The ability of the western Lowlands to compete successfully with Welsh and English iron was largely due to the introduction of the Neilson hot blast process, patented in 1828, which made it possible to exploit the blackband ore of the Monklands areas near Glasgow. The Scottish lead did not last long, however, and by the 1860s the Lowlands were taking second place to the Cleveland field in the English north-east. By then, the growth of shipbuilding on the Clyde more than compensated for the changes. During the period 1850–70 Glasgow shipbuilders were in a position to meet the rapid growth in world demand for steam ships, and

during the 1860s Glasgow's share of launchings in the United Kingdom rose from 30 per cent to 70 per cent, compared with a meagre 5 per cent earlier in the century. Glasgow also competed successfully in marine engine technology during this period and in the building of railway locomotives.

It was this rapidly expanding industrial economy which from the 1830s became a vast melting pot for migrants from neighbouring rural counties as well as from the Highlands and Ulster. In the east there was a steady flow of migrants from the eastern Highlands into Aberdeen and Edinburgh but the only industrial city on the east coast which matched the experience of the west was Dundee whose expanding jute industry attracted immigrants, many of them female, from Ireland. The flow of Ulster immigrants became a flood during the famine years 1846–51. It has been estimated that 1,000 immigrants a week arrived in Glasgow from Ireland in 1848. The result was to transform the religious and social composition of the western Lowlands, and to a lesser extent of the east, in Fife and Dundee. The number of Irish migrating into England and Wales was two or three times larger than that entering Scotland but in relation to the size of the Scottish population the proportion was much higher. It has been estimated that Irish-born inhabitants accounted in 1851 for 7.9 per cent of the population of Scotland, compared with 2.9 per cent for England and Wales. An additional complicating factor was that nearly half congregated in nine towns, Glasgow accounting for nearly 30 per cent. The result was that in western towns like Glasgow, Paisley and Kilmarnock the Irish-born amounted to between 10 and 18 per cent of the population. (Dundee had 18 per cent, Edinburgh only 6 per cent.) What has been described as the most Calvinist society in Europe was confronted with the problem of absorbing a largely Catholic, often Irish-speaking, immigrant population. This was the plantation of Ulster in reverse which had the effect of creating a new sub-culture in the Scottish Lowlands.

The long-term result of Irish immigration into the western Lowlands was to raise ethnic and religious tensions to a pitch unequalled elsewhere in the British Isles outside Belfast and Liverpool. Here, as in Ulster and Liverpool, the Orange Lodge took root. The Irish, like the Slavs in nineteenth-century Pennsylvania, were looked upon as a source of cheap labour. On the whole (Dundee excepted) the east escaped the problems presented by ethnic diversity. As a consequence, in the 1880s, when the 'No Popery' card was played in politics as a counter to Home Rule, it had much less success in the east than in the west. Gladstonian Liberalism survived in the east when it was being defeated in the west.

Another source of contrast between east and west had its origins in the 'Disruption' within the Church of Scotland. In 1843, over 470 ministers,

representing some two-fifths of the total, left the Established Church, taking with them a similar proportion of elders and laity. It was an extraordinary event, which to some extent was an expression of Scottish nationalism against the control of Westminster symbolised by Sir Robert Peel. It was also a protest against the power of ecclesiastical patronage exercised by landlords. Perhaps also it was something of a middle-class movement drawing support from shopkeepers and skilled artisans. Certainly the speed with which the Free Church was able to organise and finance a rival organisation to the Church of Scotland indicates that it was able to draw upon local resources of wealth and expertise. Above all it drew upon the evangelical revival of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Resentment against state control and patronage was of long standing and had already led to secessions from the Established Church during the eighteenth century. The Covenanting tradition with belief in a 'gathered' Church as opposed to an all-embracing establishment was still strong in the west, where memories of Claverhouse and Drumclog were kept alive. But the 'Disruption' in numbers and organisation represented a division of much greater proportions. It had its origins in the rivalry between 'moderates' and 'evangelicals' from the late eighteenth century onwards, which grew in intensity in the 1830s. A trial of strength took place in the courts over such issues as the control of the 'quoad sacra' chapels which had been built largely by the evangelicals to supplement the parish church in some areas. The right of patrons to present ministers to a living over the wishes of the presbytery was another key question.

The verdict of the courts went against the evangelicals and the 'Disruption' took place led by Thomas Chalmers, whose views were Tory and who still believed in the desirability of an establishment. Chalmers himself may have believed this, but increasingly the logic of events took over and the Free Church, after Chalmers' death in 1847, moved towards the position of the dissenting churches on disestablishment. The Free Church had found itself in conflict with the state. After the 'Disruption', it also met with active opposition from many of the landlords, who refused sites for churches and schools. Tenants without written leases found themselves threatened with eviction. Shopkeepers were told that 'they would forfeit the custom and countenance of the wealthy and influential in the country'. It was said about Cromarty that 'the spirit in this part of the country is bitterness itself. Servants dismissed, labourers thrown out of employment, angry interviews between landlord and tenant – we hear of little else in this corner.' Chalmers complained that 'the upper classes looked on us [the Free Church] as so many Radicals or revolutionaries'.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, what we may call the 'peripheral' cultures of the British Isles were exposed to forces of change, emanating, in the main, from the 'centre'. The onset of industrialism in south Wales, the north of Ireland and the south of Scotland occurred largely in response to the demands of the English market or as a consequence of English investment. Hence, during this period, the individual histories of Wales, Ireland and Scotland can only be understood in relation to a wider British Isles context in which England, by virtue of its demographic and economic superiority, took a leading role.

Ireland, newly incorporated within the United Kingdom, experienced government intervention most during these years. During the 1830s, in particular, the Whig government introduced a series of reforms in education (the National Schools), poor relief, the abolition of tithes, municipal government and policing. In the 1880s Gladstone was to look back to these years, when Thomas Drummond had been Under-Secretary for Ireland (1835–40), as a model to follow.

In general, it may be said that the 'periphery' played a restricted role during these years. Resistance to pressures which were perceived as coming from England was sporadic and localised. In Wales, serious unrest was confined to the Merthyr Rising of 1831, the Chartist attack on Newport in 1839 and the local outbreaks of 'Rebecca'. In Ireland, the agrarian violence of the Ribbonmen, though endemic, was of a local character. In Scotland, the troubles of the 1820s were confined to the Glasgow area. For much of the time the pattern of government within the United Kingdom rested upon tacit alliances between Westminster and the local ascendancies of Wales, Ireland and Scotland. This situation began to change in mid-century when Irish Catholicism, Welsh nonconformity and the Free Churches of Scotland formed an alliance with English dissent to bring pressure to bear upon the English establishment. It was this working entente, whose basis lay in a common antagonism to the English establishment and its local allies, which led to the formation of the Liberal party towards the end of the 1850s. The 'centre' was now to be exposed to political pressures from the 'periphery'.

Postscript

This chapter takes the concept of 'melting pot' as its organising theme. This has certain advantages from the standpoint of 'four nations' history, of highlighting the significance of ethnicity. With the advantage of hindsight, however, I now see that it is open to criticism for playing down the role of class-based politics and in particular for ignoring the Chartist Movement of the 1830s. There has been something of a reaction against

E.P. Thompson's classic *The Making of the English Working Class*. This work, despite all its emotionalism, did have the merit, in my view, of stressing the role of class conflict. His title perhaps would have been more appropriate to the Chartist Movement itself. The traditional working class with which Thompson was concerned in his book was that of handloom weavers and of workers adversely affected by the Industrial Revolution. In contrast the Chartist Movement, aiming at Universal Suffrage and the Ballot among other reforms, drew its support from the new industrial working class. Thus the banners of a Chartist procession in Manchester in August 1840, representing dyers, dressers and boilermakers among others, called for 'the Prosperity of the Working Classes'. Their targets included 'Aristocracy, Shopocracy, White slavery and State Paupers'. Flags carrying the Irish Shamrock and the Scots Thistle as well as the English Rose were carried, indicating a multi-ethnic dimension, going beyond the 'Englishness' of which Thompson was so passionate an advocate. The Irishman Fergus O Connor played a key role in the movement during these years, providing a more class-based British Isles approach to Irish problems than that of the nationalist Daniel O Connell. The clash between the two men over what they meant by reform may be seen to symbolise the radical difference between class-based and ethnic approaches.

At the end of the 1840s the Chartist Movement resulted in failure. Indeed Thompson's book might have been better entitled 'The Breaking of the English Working Class'. In Ireland the Great Famine was the end of a period, marked also by the death of O Connell in 1847 and the collapse of the Young Irelanders in 1848. The 1850s saw English radicalism collapse in the face of English nationalism led by Palmerston.

10 The rise of ethnic politics

By the mid-nineteenth century a system of road, rail and sea communications brought the various communities of the British Isles more closely together than had ever been the case hitherto. To the network of roads built by Telford in the years after 1815 were added regular services of steam packets linking Britain and Ireland and a well-developed railway system. Road and rail routes from London to Dublin via Holyhead across the Menai Straits became a matter of routine. Ireland, Wales and Scotland were now open more than ever to English influences. Ireland in particular became more anglicised than either Wales or Scotland and the number of 'native' Gaelic-speakers declined drastically in the second half of the nineteenth century. The culture of southern England seemed destined to reach a position of total dominance throughout the British Isles.

In fact, however, this period (c. 1860–1914) witnessed a remarkable growth of 'ethnic' consciousness throughout the British Isles. During the first half of the nineteenth century 'class' issues had predominated in such movements as Chartism in England, Ribbonism and the Tithe War in Ireland, the Rebecca Riots in Wales and the Highland Clearances in Scotland. From mid-century, however, it was the dominance of England, particularly that of the south-east, which came to seem objectionable to influential groups in Ireland, Wales and Scotland. In Ireland, the catastrophic death toll of the Famine, accompanied as it was by massive emigration, was blamed, by and large, on the failure of the English government to provide adequate relief. Enforced emigration came to be seen as tantamount to eviction. In Wales, the affair of the Blue Books (1847) gave rise to outbursts of anti-English sentiment. Welsh critics of the Blue Books, in which the quality of Welsh education had been censured for its narrow biblicism, spoke of the 'Night of the Long Knives', a reference to the popular belief that in c. AD 600 Welsh princes had been massacred by Saxons. In Scotland, the 'Disruption' of 1843, when the Church of Scotland split into two bitterly hostile factions, led to the rise of nationalist feelings among those who left the establishment. It was they,

with their memories of the Covenanters, who seemed truer, at least by their own lights, to the Scottish past.

There was, finally, the growing power of English nonconformity. In 1851 a census taken on church attendance indicated that dissent in England (and Wales) had gained a position of near-equality with the Established Church. During the second half of the century, nonconformity, despite its divisions, came to play an increasingly prominent role in English national life. More obvious examples of discrimination against the nonconformists had been done away with during the 1830s. In several fields, however, particularly that of higher education, nonconformists could feel that they were treated as second-class citizens.

The Crimean War (1854–6) distracted attention from class issues, and during the long ascendancy of Palmerston, who was Prime Minister for most of the decade 1855–65, a strident English nationalism took the centre of the political stage. After Palmerston's death in 1865, however, the 'ethnic communities' of Ireland, Scotland and Wales together with those of English nonconformity began to express their grievances more vocally. It was the combination of these various ethnic (or quasi-ethnic in the case of northern England) groups which made possible the rise of the Liberal party under Gladstone. In 1868 after his victory in the election of that year Gladstone declared that 'our three corps d'armée, I may almost say, have been Scottish Presbyterians, English and Welsh Nonconformists and Irish Roman Catholics'.

During the second half of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth century, ethnic issues became of immense importance in the politics of the British Isles. Ireland in particular presented problems which no government, Liberal or Conservative, was able to ignore. The slow rise of the Home Rule party in Ireland began after the general election of 1874, the first election when the secret ballot was normal practice in all three kingdoms. Irish issues, particularly land reform, raised implications for landlord–tenant relations elsewhere in the British Isles. Irish-American groups also became involved with the affairs of the homeland to an ever-increasing extent.

During this period, as we have seen for earlier periods, the course of English history cannot be understood purely in narrowly national terms, a judgement which applies with equal validity to the histories of Wales, Ireland or Scotland. Despite the impact of the various improvements in transportation and communications during the nineteenth century, ethnic divisiveness became a dominant characteristic of the British Isles during this period.

In England itself, during the second half of the nineteenth century, the pattern of politics was transformed by the emergence during the 1860s of

the Liberal party. The issues which led to the creation of the party from an alliance of Whig landlords and radicals were in large measure English in character. In particular, the social divide separating Church and Chapel helps to explain the dominance of nonconformity in the new party. As Augustine Birrell put it, the cultural split between Anglicans and dissenters was like 'Offa's Dyke – broad, deep and practically impassable, cutting clear through social life'. Montagu remarked to Asquith about the Liberal party: 'There is no getting away from the fact that ours is a Nonconformist Party with Nonconformist susceptibilities and Nonconformist prejudices.' Such issues as the disestablishment of the Church of England, the removal of educational grievances and the pressure for control of the drink trade derived from the English nonconformist heritage of the Liberal party. The English past, especially from the seventeenth century, looked very different from a nonconformist vantage point than it did from an Anglican one.

But the Liberal party was something more than an English political party. The reform of the franchise in England, Wales and Scotland in 1867 and in Ireland in 1868 made possible a more effective popular approach to British Isles politics than had been the case hitherto. Irish Catholic grievances in particular came to occupy a central position in Liberal policy. Under Palmerston the Whigs had been the party of the Protestant ascendancy. Lord Palmerston was an Anglo-Irish landlord descended from the Sir John Temple whose work on the 1641 massacre became the standard Protestant account. Under Gladstone, however, the Liberal party made an Irish Catholic issue, the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, the main plank of its platform during the 1868 election. Gladstone's Land Act of 1870 was a first attempt to deal with the problems of tenant right in Ireland. Another Irish issue, university education for Irish Catholics, brought the government down. These years were also marked by the execution of the 'Manchester Martyrs', Allen, Larkin and O Brien, in the last public hanging in Britain. Fenianism, the demand for an Irish Republic, did not decline but was fuelled by what was seen as the unjust execution of three innocent men. Irish-American nationalism also became increasingly important and in due course a factor in politics.

For the next fifty years Irish issues were to influence the course of English politics. Irish 'reforms' were not seen by the political elite as of localised significance: they were considered to have serious implications for the rest of the British Isles and for the British empire at large. This had already been the case during Gladstone's first administration when the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland and the 1870 Land Act were looked upon as the Irish end of a large wedge. Gladstone's Irish Land Act of 1881, which was designed to undermine the basis of political

agitation by making concessions to Irish farmers, caused serious misgiving at the Whig end of Gladstone's Liberal coalition, particularly among those landlords with large Irish or Scottish estates.

Political reforms which were aimed primarily at changing the character of the English electorate were also looked upon as having wider implications. The Reform Acts of 1884–5, involving redistribution of seats and an extension of a wider franchise to include the counties as well as the boroughs, are normally discussed in terms of a purely English context. In fact, however, unlike 1832 and 1867 the reforms of 1884–5 attempted to deal with Ireland as uniformly as the rest of the United Kingdom. English politicians were well aware of the possible effects of these changes. Hartington declared at one stage that 'if this franchise [is] now given [we shall] be forced to concede Home Rule'. He spoke of

a system which will exclude . . . more than a million protestants . . . [all those] opposed to Home Rule . . . the owners of landed property and the great majority of capitalists, manufacturers, merchants, men of business and professional men in Ireland – and will not only exclude them but will misrepresent them by a body . . . hostile to every interest they possess and every opinion they hold.

In this passage we may recognise the voice of an Anglo-Irish landlord, possessor of estates which originated in the Elizabethan plantation. As a Whig aristocrat Hartington had been a follower of the Anglo-Irish landlord Palmerston. The marquess of Lansdowne, descendant of Sir William Petty, was another prominent Whig, with Anglo-Irish connections.

Of all these issues, it was Irish Home Rule which had the most profound influence upon the course of English politics during this period. Any threat to the stability of the Union during the early and middle decades of the nineteenth century had been contained by successive British governments. O Connell had campaigned for 'Repeal' during Tory administrations while compromising with Whig governments for redress of specific grievances. The attempted rebellion of the Young Irelanders in 1848 had been a fiasco. Politically the Ireland with which British governments had to deal was the Ireland of the Protestant ascendancy. The situation began to change during the 1860s when Gladstone, in response to the threat posed by the Fenians, attempted to woo middle-class Catholic Ireland. Disestablishment, land reform and educational reform proved insufficient, however, to meet the challenge of a growing nationalism, and Home Rule became an important political issue after the 1874 election. It was to become even more important during the 1880s when Parnell leading a disciplined Irish party made it impossible for the British government to ignore it.

Figure 32. *Belfast postcard – 'No Home Rule'*
This pre-1914 'No Home Rule' postcard illustrates the strength of polit-
ical opposition in the north of Ireland to the Home Rule policy of the
Liberal government under Asquith. 'The Ulster Crisis' brought Ireland
to the brink of civil war and created the threat of mutiny within the
British Army Officer Corps. Partition, at first an almost unthinkable
option, became a reality in 1920 when six counties within Northern
Ireland were granted Home Rule.

Home Rule in the eyes of many Liberals and most Conservatives was
an imperial issue as much as an Irish one. During the second half of the
nineteenth century England became the centre of a world-wide empire
of which the centrepieces were the settlement colonies of Canada, Aus-
tralia and New Zealand, and the Indian empire together with a number
of colonies in East, West and South Africa. For a mixture of strategic
and economic reasons this imperial commitment led to an extension of
responsibilities in the Near East where the Suez Canal became an indis-
pensable link between the Indian Ocean and Britain. Alongside the formal
empire lay a wide commercial network in Central and South America and
the United States.

It was the new significance of empire, with England at its centre, which
made Irish Home Rule much more than a matter of administrative reor-
ganisation. Gladstone's decision in December 1885 to take up the cause of
Home Rule raised issues of 'empire' and 'race'. Within the confines of the
Liberal party, Gladstone's conversion to Home Rule was seen by some as
a means of continuing his personal dominance of the party, and no doubt

resentment against this helps to explain the decision of his colleagues Hartington and Chamberlain to dissociate themselves from him. Professor John Vincent has suggested (in *The Governing Passion* (1974)) that the significance of the Home Rule issue as a matter of principle has been misunderstood. In his view politicians sought out policies not because they believed in them but as a means of gaining political power. The extraordinary impact which the Home Rule issue had for three decades after 1886, however, suggests that something more was at work than political machination. The Home Rule issue refused to go away. It survived the downfall of Parnell in 1891 and returned to haunt English politics in 1910. During the crisis years of 1912–14 English politicians were forced to confront the possibility of a rebellion by Ulster Unionists against the Home Rule Bill.

The Home Rule crisis of 1886 led to bitter divisions within the Liberal party, culminating in the formation of a separate group of 'Liberal Unionists' who in due course joined the Conservative party. Among them was the historian of empire, Sir John Seeley, who wrote: 'In talking with a Home Ruler I am obliged to close my lips on almost all topics that interest me. I cannot trust myself to speak for I can scarcely speak with common civility.' About Gladstone he declared: 'I seriously think that if all the wicked men in England were rolled into one wicked man, he would be a mere muffer and bungler in mischief compared to Gladstone as Gladstone is now.' Seeley's hostility to Home Rule was typical of most prominent academics in Cambridge. The moral philosopher Henry Sidgwick noted that at Cambridge 'Unionists [were] gaining slowly but steadily. [I] Dined in Hall and was surprised to find the great preponderance of Unionist sentiment among the Trinity fellows – a body always, since I have known Trinity, preponderantly Liberal.' Sidgwick was utterly critical of the Home Rule Bill:

to abandon the landowners of Ireland to the tender mercies of the people who for eleven years carried on an unscrupulous private war against their rights of property – rights which those of us who supported the Land Bill of 1881 morally pledged ourselves to secure to them – this is a national crime and deep moral disgrace in which I can have no part. (Quoted in J. Roach, 'Liberalism and the Victorian Intelligentsia', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, xiii (1957), 83, 80)

The departure of the Whig landlords from Gladstone's government was perhaps not unexpected. The Land Act of 1881 and the Reform Acts of 1884–5 had placed a severe strain upon the loyalty of Hartington to his leader. What could hardly have been foreseen was the decision of the

radical politician Joseph Chamberlain to place loyalty to the Union above his commitment to the politics of 'class conflict'.

Within the Liberal party the future had seemed to many to lie with Joseph Chamberlain (1836–1914), who was to his generation of northern radicals what John Bright, his fellow member for Birmingham, had been for the 1850s and 1860s. Indeed his attacks upon the aristocracy recalled those of Bright. In 1883, in a famous speech, he launched a fierce attack upon the Conservative party leader, Lord Salisbury.

Lord Salisbury [he said] constitutes himself the spokesman of a class – of the class to which he himself belongs who toil not neither do they spin; whose fortunes – as in his case – have originated in grants in times gone by for the services which courtiers have rendered kings, and have since grown and increased while they have slept, by levying an increased share on all that other men have done by toil and labour to add to the general wealth and prosperity of the country.

Chamberlain's political reforms by extending the franchise to the rural labourers were intended to undermine the political power of the landed proprietors. In fact, the later 1880s ushered in twenty years of dominance by the Conservative party, which, once based upon the support of the rural areas and the small agricultural boroughs, transformed itself into a city-based party.

Chamberlain's 'fiefdom' of Birmingham was lost to the Liberals when he broke with Gladstone over Home Rule. In the Birmingham area a mixture of imperialism and protectionism proved to be more potent as a vote-catcher than Home Rule. In Lancashire, as Peter Clarke has written, 'the greatest single mainstay of the Conservative party was the presence in the towns of an Irish immigrant community living uneasily among the indigenous population' (*Lancashire and the New Liberalism* (Cambridge, 1971), p. 37). Disraeli had already played the 'ethnic' card with some success in the 1874 election. The rise of Irish Home Rule as a key issue in politics further consolidated the position of the Conservatives. The politics of 'nativism' triumphed in Preston, St Helens and other Lancashire towns. Manchester, once a Liberal stronghold, went Conservative. The issue of Home Rule made it possible for the Conservatives to divide the north by appealing to a potent combination of nationalism, imperialism and anti-immigrant feeling. In the early twentieth century, party pamphlets criticised 'the present mongrel combination of teetotallers, Irish revolutionists, Welsh demagogues, Small Englanders, English separatists and general uprooters of all that is national and good'. They attacked a government which allowed 'foreign blacklegs and every

other foreign undesirable to come in hundreds . . . Any numbers of ships may now land parties of . . . diseased and criminal aliens on our shores.'

To this was now added a stress on national unity:

> Shoulder to shoulder, strong in pride of race
> What fire shall thrust us from our ancient place
> The union safe ruled with an even hand
> The sister isle once more a prosperous land.

The Liberals (termed Radical-Socialists by their opponents) were described as

> A mob of factions, taught to shirk and steal
> But not to fight awaits the Conqueror's heel.
> The union sold, a British Isle no more,
> Ireland breeds treason at the Empire's core.

The Liberal party which won the election of 1906 was different in some striking ways from the party of Gladstone. Of course, the nonconformist north still remained the heartland of the party. In the Methodist mining villages of the north-east, temperance was a live issue in 1906. As one Sunday school teacher commented: 'After the Wilderness the Promised Land. And we have entered Canaan at last.' *The Sunday School Journal* declared, 'No Christian patriot can, on reflection, afford to stand idly by in supine indifference or pharisaic cynicism while the Drink Scourge, which combines in itself the evils of war, famine and pestilence put together, rolls its fiery tide of destruction o'er the land.' Among the leadership of the party, however, the balance of power was shifting towards those who argued that fundamental social reforms involving the intervention of the state were the answer to social evils and not individual regeneration on the lines advocated by Samuel Smiles. In the eyes of the 'Progressives', the politics of 'class' was the answer to the politics of 'empire'.

When the new Liberal government was formed, traditional issues such as Welsh disestablishment, Irish Home Rule and licensing reform were very much part of its agenda. Increasingly, however, the initiative was seized by the Progressives. Social reforms such as old age pensions, unemployment and health insurance, the reform of the Poor Law and the introduction of labour exchanges now came to the fore under pressure from Asquith, who became Prime Minister in 1908, and Lloyd George who was Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1908 to 1915. There was no individual item in this programme of reform to which the Unionists could object. Indeed, it could be argued that the Liberals, once the party of laissez-faire, had taken over the mantle of Tory Paternalism. What was at stake, however, was the means by which the changes were to be financed.

Chamberlain had seen indirect taxation as the main source of new revenue. The New Liberals, from the 1907 budget onwards, proposed to tax the wealthy, especially those who had benefited from the huge rise in urban land values. As Churchill put it, the Chancellor wanted to know 'How much have you got? and how did you get it?'

The voice of the Progressives was the *Manchester Guardian*, which, under the editorship of C. P. Scott (1846–1932), achieved a national importance. The success of the *Guardian* indicated that the Liberals were still very much a northern party; Scott himself was a Manchester man. Other writers for the paper such as C. E. Montague and J. A. Hobson were also from the north. But 'Progressivism' was more than a northern movement even though most of its leaders came to write for the *Guardian*. Though some of its members such as R. H. Tawney remained Christian, others were influenced by the wave of agnosticism which swept the intelligentsia in post-Darwinian England. The 'New Liberals', as the Progressives were also termed, were in many ways nearer to Socialism than to the old-style Liberalism of Gladstone. As L. T. Hobhouse declared, 'The Old Liberalism, we thought, had done its work . . . What was needed was to build a social democracy on the basis so prepared and for that we needed new formulas, new inspirations. The old individualism was standing in our way and we were for cutting it down' (quoted in S. Collini, *Liberalism and Sociology* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 60–1).

The Unionists, now in a minority in the Commons, turned to the House of Lords as their main line of defence. The battle was joined over Lloyd George's 'People's budget' of 1909 in which he sought to raise extra revenue by such measures as 'super tax' on incomes over £5,000, higher rates for death duties and a levy on land values. The constitutional crisis which followed in 1910 was marked by two general elections fought on the issue of the right of the Lords to veto the budget. What was at stake, however, was the social policy of the 'New Liberalism'.

Victory went to the New Liberals in 1910. The future seemed to lie with the politics of class. The social cleavage, in Hobson's view, lay with 'organised labour against the possessing and educated classes on the one hand and against the public house and unorganised labour on the other'. He argued that the contrast between north and south was between a Producer's England, which was Liberal, and a Consumer's England, which was Conservative.

The actual facts of the political situation proved to be more complex. Religion and ethnicity returned once more in the shape of Irish Home Rule, as they had done in 1886. Liberal leaders had turned lukewarm on Home Rule after Gladstone's death. Asquith had argued in 1905 that a Home Rule Bill 'would wreck the fortunes of the party for another

20 years'. Haldane believed that 'it was vital that there should be a Liberal party that was completely independent of the Irish'. The election results of 1910, however, made the Liberals dependent upon the Irish parliamentary party.

The United Kingdom in 1914 may well have been on the brink of civil war on the key issue of the Union with Ireland. Other questions, the violent strikes of 1911 and the challenge offered by women suffragettes, took second place to the Home Rule issue. From 1911 onwards, Unionist party leaders encouraged the Ulster Unionists to make a show of force. Bonar Law, the leader of the party, declared his support in unambiguous terms. In 1914 the army entered on the political scene, when, in the so-called 'Mutiny on the Curragh', officers stationed in Ireland made clear their unwillingness to be used in operations against Ulster. What changed the whole situation was the outbreak of war in August 1914. When hostilities ended in November 1918 a new set of factors had come into play which may be said to mark the beginning of a new period in the history of England, and of the British Isles.

The Ireland whose grievances this legislation was intended to redress was virtually an unknown country to most English politicians (and, it must be said, to most English historians). As Professor Vincent has pointed out (in *Gladstone and Ireland* (London, 1977)), Gladstone went to Ireland only once on a short visit and while there stayed largely in the company of Anglo-Irish landlords. From the vantage point of Westminster, Ireland appeared to be a simpler society than it was in fact. Political issues in Ireland were presumed to be essentially religious in character.

Religious issues were, of course, important. In the 1852 election in Ireland, the anti-Catholic riots in Stockport became a key electoral question in Co. Mayo and an electoral placard read

> Massacre and Sacrilege at Stockport!
> Irish Catholics murdered in their beds!
> Twenty-four houses wrecked and plundered!
> The priest's house burnt!
> The Chapel sacked and pillaged!
> Catholics of Ireland! Whoever votes for a supporter of Lord Derby's
>   government votes for a massacre of his countrymen!
> The violation of the House of GOD; and
> The pollution of the BODY and BLOOD OF HIS REDEEMER!!!
> Down with Derby and McAlpine!

Such religious issues could override internal social divisions within the Catholic body. The fact remains, however, that the 'Catholic' south, though it might appear to be united behind its priests, was torn by internal social conflict for much of this period. Before the Famine, serious

Figure 33. *Stormont and the Edward Carson statue*

The lawyer Edward Carson (1854–1935), a Dubliner by birth, was a key figure in the anti-Home Rule movement which led eventually to the establishment of autonomy for much of Ulster (excluding the counties of Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan). The parliament at Stormont near Belfast was the grandiose symbol of a regime which was brought to an end in 1972 by the Conservative government of Edward Heath.

antagonisms could, and did, develop between farmers and labourers (both Catholic) over the price of potato land (termed 'conacre') on which the labourer depended for his very survival. It was this rather than landlord–tenant conflict which seems to have lain behind much of the rural violence in southern Ireland during the pre-Famine period. The underground movement known as 'Ribbonism' (from the ribbon worn by its members) seems to have originated in the resentment of labourers and cottiers against the mainly Catholic 'strong farmers'. It survived in spite of repeated denunciation by bishops and clergy. Demographic pressures lay behind such unrest. Indeed, the population of Ireland rose from over four million in 1781 to over eight million in 1841.

In the north, industrialisation acted as a safety valve, preserving its social fabric from overpopulation and famine. In the south, by contrast, the social structure was transformed in the late 1840s by the Great Famine, a cataclysm which led to the deaths of nearly one million people and the emigration under appalling conditions of one and a half million more. Many died of starvation but the chief cause of death, it appears, was disease in the form of typhus, relapsing fever and dropsy, brought on by lack of nourishment. How much of this suffering was avoidable is still very much a matter of debate. Malthusians looked upon it as the inevitable consequence of overpopulation. Other commentators believed that government aid came too little and too late. Nationalists like John Mitchel put the blame directly on the British government (a thesis which is still very much alive among some groups in both Ireland and the United States). It seems clear, however, that the dependence of so many upon the potato as their main item of diet involved great risk of famine, which had indeed occurred on a lesser scale several times before 1845. It is worth pointing out that the incidence of mortality was much less while the Tories, with their paternalist traditions, were in power than under the laissez-faire Whigs, who insisted until too late in the day that any long-term solution must be found in the laws of supply and demand.

The impact of the Famine was not felt equally throughout the south. Its main effect was upon the poorer, heavily populated areas of the west and south-west, where dependence upon the potato was high. The chief victims came from the labouring class who had fewer resources to fall back on in time of crisis. Emigration was heaviest among the small farmers, many of whom held on until the third failure of the potato crop before deciding to leave. The north, where oats rather than potatoes formed the main item of diet, was unaffected by the trauma, whereas in the south population control became a major cause for concern. A distinctive culture developed, marked by late marriage and strict sexual taboos which had the result of controlling the growth of population. The arranged

marriage or 'match' had been a feature of 'strong farmer' society before the Famine. It now became more widespread. At the same time the proportion of unmarried men and women in the population rose. In this as in so much else north and south drew apart. In the north there seems to have been a greater degree of sexual permissiveness in rural society (e.g. in Island Magee where one fifth of women getting married were pregnant or believed themselves to be). Labourers also survived as an important segment of the population of the north, a fact which was to have important consequences in the 1880s when Protestant landlords appealed over the heads of the tenant farmers to their labourers.

If the contrast between north and south was accentuated as a result of the Famine, there were other, cultural, factors at work in the same direction after mid-century. In the south, the post-Famine decades were marked by what Professor Emmet Larkin has termed the 'Devotional Revolution' (in 'The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850–75', *American Historical Review*, XXVII (1972)), a movement of ecclesiastical reform introduced with papal backing by Paul Cullen, archbishop of Dublin (1803–78). The 'Devotional Revolution' was in part a response to missionary endeavours by the Established Church, with the backing of such Ulster landlords as the duke of Manchester and the earl of Roden. It also may be seen as the continuation of attempts made before the Famine to 'reform' a still vigorous popular culture which in many respects was at variance with Catholic orthodoxy. Institutions such as the 'wake', where games with an obvious sexual implication were played, and the 'pattern' (the celebration of the feast day of local saints), which was an accepted occasion for courting, came under attack. Until the Famine, the campaign enjoyed only partial success. After the Famine, the task of reform was made much easier since the areas affected by depopulation were in many cases the poorer Irish-speaking sectors where popular culture had been strongest. Cullen went much further than had been attempted earlier. Under his leadership, clerical discipline was tightened, and new churches built. He was also responsible for introducing Italian-style devotions such as Quarante Ore (Forty Hours), Benediction, Devotions to the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Conception. Rosary beads, the scapular, holy pictures and holy medals also became part of the routine of religious life. The apparition of the Blessed Virgin at Knock (Co. Mayo) in 1879 may well have been one of the fruits of 'Devotional Revolution'.

While this was happening in the south (and among Catholics in the north) northern Protestantism was taking a more evangelical direction. The 1850s saw the rise of a 'Protestant Crusade' which had the backing of such Ulster landlords as the duke of Manchester and the earl of Roden. The aim of the enterprise was to bring biblical Christianity to the west

of Ireland and though the intentions of its backers were, no doubt, laudable, the effect was to create religious tensions between themselves and the Catholic bishops, led by the nationalist John MacHale. In the north itself the preaching of the Reverend Thomas Drew about the menace of 'Popery' led to several days of rioting in Belfast in 1857.

The real Protestant equivalent of the Devotional Revolution was the Second Great Awakening in 1859. That year, the 'Year of Grace', was marked by an extraordinary religious revival which began at the village of Kells near Ballymena (Co. Antrim), and spread throughout Ulster. The Presbyterian Church in Ulster reported an accession of 10,000 new members in the first three months of the revival, which later spread to Wales, Scotland and part of England. Unusual physical manifestations were seen by its participants as a sign of divine grace, though critics maintained it was religious hysteria. There were obvious links between this movement and the American Great Awakening of 1858. Professor William Gibson, soon to be moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, visited the United States and wrote about his experiences under the title *Pentecost or the Work of God in Philadelphia.*

The effect of the religious revivals in both north and south was to accentuate already existing cultural and economic differences. More and more in the south the distinguishing feature of Irish identity was seen to lie in Catholicism. Father Tom Burke, a Dominican preacher, said in 1872:

Take an average Irishman – I don't care where you find him – and you will find that the very first principle in his mind is 'I am not an Englishman because I am a Catholic.' Take an Irishman wherever he is found all over the earth and any casual observer will at once come to the conclusion 'Oh he is an Irishman, he is a Catholic.' The two go together.

Attitudes like this, though not universal, seem to have become more common, no doubt in part because they corresponded to the experience of emigrants in the United States, where segregation took place between the Catholic Irish and the Protestant 'Scotch-Irish'. The financial contribution of Irish-Americans was directed inevitably towards the cause of Catholic nationalism. Protestant Ulster could count upon the sympathy and active help of Orange groups in Canada, especially Toronto.

The difference between the two cultures was also revealed in contrasting attitudes towards the past. A 'Catholic' interpretation was likely to single out Hugh O Neill, Owen Roe O Neill, the penal laws and Daniel O Connell for emphasis. 'Protestant' interpretations of Irish history would almost certainly centre upon the massacre of 1641, the battle of the Boyne in 1690 and the foundation of the Orange Order, while ignoring the role

of Presbyterians in the united Irish movement of 1798. Political songs became the vehicle for these interpretations in popular culture.

To the effect of religious revival as a cause of division should be added that of 'Fenianism'. The 'advanced' nationalism of the 1860s drew much of its inspiration from the Italian nationalist movement of Mazzini. In contrast, Paul Cullen, Catholic archbishop of Dublin and a dominant figure in the hierarchy, looked upon the Fenians as the Irish counterparts of those who had driven Pius IX from Rome in 1848 and later had led the campaign for Italian unification, to the detriment of the Papal States. The Fenians themselves also looked back to 1798 and to the Young Ireland movement which had inspired the abortive 1848 insurrection in Tipperary. The founders of the Fenian movement hoped to find support for their ideas among the post-Famine exiles of the United States as well as in Ireland itself. Where they differed from O Connell and those, like Cullen, who took him as a model for Irish politicians was in their intention to establish a republic, if necessary by force. Cullen in 1864 declared, 'it is foolish, it is wicked to speak of having recourse to violence and bloodshed or to expect anything good from illegal combinations and secret societies . . . It is our duty to walk in the footsteps of the great Liberator, Daniel O Connell.' In spite of such condemnation, the Fenians did make headway in southern Ireland. Their attempted invasion of Canada may have misfired and their insurrection in Ireland was a failure, but what they lost in the field they gained in publicity. The execution of the 'Manchester Martyrs' in 1869 undoubtedly helped the Fenian cause. A leading Fenian, O Donovan Rossa, was elected to parliament in 1873. Michael Davitt, who had experienced hostility towards the Irish as an immigrant in Lancashire, joined the movement and was imprisoned.

Not the least important effect of Fenianism was to drive yet another wedge between north and south. The very events which led to a growth of sympathy towards the Fenians in the south discredited them in the north. The Fenians were by no means typical of the general attitude of Irish-Americans, many of whom, under the influence of their clergy, steered clear of secret organisations. In the eyes of the north, however, the Fenians seemed to be the most active of Irish-American groups. When in 1882, Lord Frederick Cavendish, the newly appointed Chief Secretary and Thomas Burke, his Under-Secretary, were brutally murdered in Phoenix Park, this merely confirmed northern suspicions about the immoral methods and aims of Fenianism.

The Famine left bitter memories, but the middle decades of the nineteenth century were a period of prosperity for many Irish farmers, as they were for those in Britain also. In 1855 Michael Donohoe, a Co. Carlow farmer, wrote to his brother in the United States:

All the accounts that I have seen represent America to be in a bad state, particularly the working class Irish. Well, when America is getting bad, Ireland is getting good. The last two years were the best perhaps that were in Ireland for the last twenty years. The price of every description of agricultural produce was very high and the crops were pretty good, so that farmers and indeed everyone recovered from the shock they received since 45. I believe old times are returning to us again.

In the late 1870s, however, again as in Britain, Irish farmers were hard hit by a combination of bad harvests, competition from American wheat and a drop in demand in England. The worst year was 1879/80 especially among the smallholdings of the west, where Michael Davitt and a group of local Fenians organised what was in effect a rural trade union, known as the Irish National Land League. The movement might well have remained of largely western significance but it was brought into the mainstream of national politics by Charles Stewart Parnell. Parnell, a Protestant landlord from Co. Wicklow, was a member of the loosely organised group of 'Home Rule' members of parliament but not yet its leader. The land question, together with a policy of parliamentary obstruction, provided him with a platform which eventually gave him the leadership in 1880.

Parnell spoke at Westport in June 1879 and told his audience of small farmers 'You must show the landlords that you intend to hold a firm grip on your homesteads and lands. You must not allow yourselves to be dispossessed as you were dispossessed in 1847.' During the same year he also managed to win the support of influential Irish-American groups, including the Fenians. However, the 'Parnellites' in the House of Commons after the 1880 general election numbered only twenty-four. The Church was still at this date suspicious of those who had a whiff of Fenianism about them. Sometime between 1880 and 1885, however, the Catholic bishops, or most of them, came down on Parnell's side. The results were to be seen in the election of 1885 when Parnell's Home Rule party, now much more of a 'machine' than it had been in 1880, won eighty-five seats, putting it in a position to hold a balance between the Liberal and Conservative parties in the House of Commons.

Parnell's success is normally seen, and rightly, as a major change in the history of Irish nationalism. Of not less significance, however, was the reaction which it evoked in the north, as well as among southern landlords. If Parnell united the disparate elements in the south, he also made possible a counter-coalition in the north. Northern Protestants were divided by class, ethnicity and religion. There was little in common between the Orange Lodges drawing their membership from rural and urban labourers and the Presbyterian tenant farmers. Fear of Home Rule, however, drew these varied social and religious groups together in a political alliance which lasted well into the twentieth century.

The Home Rule populist coalition had in fact called into existence a populist coalition against it. The extension of the parliamentary franchise in 1884 which made possible Parnell's victory also gave the vote to the Orange Lodges of the north. Serious divisions still remained between Liberal Unionists and Conservatives and, within the Conservative party, between the official leadership and the Orange Lodges, but the threat of Home Rule in 1886 led to the creation of the Ulster Loyalist Anti-Repeal Union. Unionists controlled the north-east as completely as the Home Rulers controlled the south.

Class conflict, between tenant and landlord, provided much of the impetus behind Home Rule in the south. It was countered in the north by an appeal to religion and ethnicity. Clerical leaders in Ulster made contact with the Scottish Protestant Alliance and the Protestant Institute of Great Britain. As James Henderson, owner of the *Belfast News Letter*, put it: 'It is greatly to be desired that we should stir up the feeling of Scotland in favour of this movement . . . I believe that if we can stir up religious feeling in Scotland we have won the battle.' On a visit to Belfast in February 1886, Lord Randolph Churchill assured the Unionists of the support which they enjoyed in England and a little later coined the phrase 'Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right.' Here was the equivalent of Parnell's equally stirring sentence 'No man has the right to fix the boundary of the march of a nation.'

In the 1860s Gladstone and Bright had planned to unite Irish Catholics and Irish Presbyterians. The disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1869 was calculated to please both groups and the Land Act of 1870, though unsatisfying in many respects, was intended to appeal to tenant farmers of each denomination. As a consequence the Liberals who had lacked support in Ulster began to build up a base there as the anti-landlord party. In the nine Ulster counties, the number of Liberal seats rose from two in 1868 to fourteen in 1880. Gladstone must also have hoped that he would do even better in the 1885 election after the extension of the franchise. In the event, however, the Conservatives won twenty-one seats in the counties compared to nine for the Liberals. The results were even worse in 1886 when Gladstonian Liberals won only three seats in the counties. Elsewhere in Ireland the Home Rule party took every seat. Outside the north-east the political power of the ascendancy had been wiped out. The 1880s thus brought into the open a polarisation which had existed for many decades. In the south, a largely Catholic middle class now held power, a shift which had been first revealed decisively in the elections to the Poor Law Boards in the late 1870s. It remained now to see what the long-term consequences of this division would be.

The years since 1879 had been full of incident. In 1879 there had been the spectacular murder of Lord Leitrim. In 1880 the 'Boycott' had been invoked against Captain Boycott, the agent of the earl of Erne, and an expedition of fifty Orangemen left the Farnham estate to give him aid. The year 1880 had been marked by hundreds of rural outrages in the west. In 1882, the Phoenix Park murders took place. Gladstone's Land Act had been passed in 1881 with the intention of detaching land agitation from general political issues. It had enjoyed some success. But agitation among leaseholders, who were not covered by the Act, continued. There was further radical development with the so-called 'Plan of Campaign', from 1885 onwards, which directed hostile attention towards particular estates. Gladstone's decision to bring a Home Rule Bill before the House of Commons should be seen against this background. What seemed like statesmanship in the eyes of the south appeared more like capitulation to anarchy in the view of northerners, Liberal and Conservative alike.

As suggested above, though there may not have been two nations in Ireland, there are clear grounds for believing that there were two politico-religious cultures. Home Rule did not come about in 1886 but the cultural gap continued to exist and even to widen. The 1880s saw the growth of the Gaelic Athletic Association in the south while association football spread in the north. With the foundation of the Gaelic League in 1893 an interest in the Irish language became one of the symbols of south-ern Irish identity, though only a minority were involved. Not least, the Church came to favour Home Rule on moral grounds. If Home Rule meant Rome Rule for the Ulster Unionist, the Union came to stand for a type of modernity which the Catholic clergy found equally threatening from its own standpoint. For some Irish clergy, the Irish mind which had once been 'chaste, idealistic, mystical' had been sullied by 'an invading tide of English ideas'. The young Fr Lethaby in Canon Sheehan's novel *My New Curate* warned his rural parishioners against the perils of infi-delity, from which Jews and freemasons benefited. The old parish priest of *My New Curate* also mocked the dangerous doctrines of religious mod-ernism which the Higher Criticism was bringing in its wake. Home Rule promised moral as well as economic regeneration.

The elections of 1910 which left Redmond's Irish parliamentary party holding the balance in the House of Commons once more raised the spectre of Home Rule before the eyes of the northern Unionists. Threats of violence had been made in 1886. They were now renewed under the leadership of the Dubliner Edward Carson and with the backing of the Conservative party under Bonar Law, whose father had been an Ulster Presbyterian minister. The importation of arms into Ulster and the drilling of Ulster Volunteers were answered by similar demonstrations

in the south, though Redmond who had everything to gain from con-
stitutionality kept matters under control. The Home Rule Bill in fact
became law in September 1914 with the proviso that Ulster should be
allowed to opt out for six years. Early in 1916 the British administration
in Dublin fully expected to be handing over power to Redmond in the
near future. Though there was still rural unrest in certain western coun-
ties against encroachment by large graziers, the passing of Wyndham's
Land Act in 1903 had made possible the creation of a 'peasant proprietor-
ship' and, with it, agrarian peace. 'Landlordism' had been undermined
in the south though cynics suggested 'gombeenism' (from the Irish word
gamba, 'a little portion' – of interest) had replaced it. With the land ques-
tion solved and Home Rule on the statute book, it seemed not unlikely
that the post-war years in Ireland would be peaceful.

After the outbreak of war most of the Ulster Volunteers and the Irish
National Volunteers joined the British army and went off to fight on
the Western Front or at the Dardanelles. Elsewhere in the British Isles,
the common experience of the war seems to have reduced the intensity
of religious and ethnic divisions. In Ireland, a similar development was
ruled out by the Rising of Easter 1916. The extent of Irish-American
involvement in the decision to attempt a rebellion with German aid is
still unclear but it was certainly the Fenian-linked organisation, the Irish
Republican Brotherhood, which took the decision to rise in 1916, against
the wishes of the Volunteer commander, Eoin MacNeill. The surge of
sympathy for the rebels after the executions of 1916 made possible the
success of the Sinn Fein party in 1918. But '1916' also made partition,
already a possibility in 1914, far more likely. Unionists were in key posts
in Lloyd George's coalition government when the Home Rule Act was
repealed in 1920 and the Government of Ireland Act substituted. Six of
the nine counties of Ulster were partitioned from the rest and given the
equivalent of Home Rule, with their own parliament under Westminster
sovereignty. It was a 'solution' which the Treaty of 1922 with the Sinn
Fein forces left unaltered.

It was during these years (1850–1914) that Welsh politicians came to
the forefront of British Isles politics, so much so that historians have been
tempted to speak of the 'Rebirth of a Nation'. In fact, however, Wales
remained almost as deeply divided between two cultures as did Ireland.
The prominence of Welsh nonconformity within the Liberal party tended
to conceal the extent of these divisions. Thus, in 1881, the temperance
lobby achieved their first real victory with the passing of the Welsh Sun-
day Closing Act. But this success revealed the extent of the rift which was
growing between rural Wales and the industrial south-eastern counties
of east Carmarthen, Glamorgan and Monmouth. A Merthyr workman

wrote a letter to the *Merthyr Express* in which he put forward a very different point of view from that of the temperance reformers.

How would these very good people like to live days, weeks and months underground without a sight of the pub and then on a wet Sunday to keep within doors all the sunless hours, except while attending divine worship? Oh, these very generous people have their nice cosy clubs or homes which they enjoy every day. But the collier has to live in discomfort in a small home, and for nearly six months in every year never sees the sun, except on the first day of the week.

There were other signs that temperance was not seen in the same light in the south as it was in the north. Between mid-1882 and mid-1883 over 3,000 working men became members of clubs in Cardiff, an increase of 90 per cent over the year before. In 1889 there were nearly 500 shebeens in Cardiff. By the 1890s drunkenness was much more common in Glamorgan, Monmouthshire and Pembrokeshire than it was in Merioneth, Radnorshire and the rural counties. There were also indications that the number of supposedly 'bona fide' travellers markedly increased, since a journey of three miles entitled the thirsty wayfarer to be served a drink.

The second half of the nineteenth century had seen the great expansion of the south Wales coal fields, in particular those of the Rhondda valley. This was a 'boom' period during which the population of Cardiff rose from 18,000 in 1851 to 164,000 in 1901. By 1911, two-thirds of the population of Wales lived in Glamorgan and Monmouth and the industrial area of east Carmarthen. During the same period, there was a net loss of 400,000 from the rural counties. The vast modern pubs of the Rhondda valley were one indication that this was a very different world from that of the rural counties. The distinction was not as sharp in all areas of the south. In the Welsh-speaking valleys of the anthracite-mining area, conditions were more settled. It was not uncommon for miners to 'set out' potatoes on the land of a nearby farmer in return for help at harvest time. In general, however, the contrast between rural and industrial cultures was clear-cut. A miner from these areas commented that

Life to us in the Rhondda was exceedingly artificial . . . There is not a farm to be seen anywhere . . . The tink of the damn pit, the tink of the tramcars on the road, that's all you would hear. Rhondda people are acclimatised to what I would say is a very uncouth proletarian life . . . in the sense that there is nothing natural about it. (Quoted in D. Smith, *A People and a Proletariat* (London, 1980), p. 175)

The social problems which the miners faced could hardly be alleviated by exhortation to temperance and self-help.

Despite the growing imbalance in favour of the south, the political leadership of the Welsh Liberals remained with the rural counties, where Welsh-speaking dissent was strong. To the small farmers, the example of

Ireland seemed to provide a possible answer to their difficulties. In June 1886 an assembly of tenant farmers at Rhyl in north Wales pressed for a Land Act on the lines of Gladstone's 1881 Irish Land Act. Tom Ellis, member for Merioneth, and descendant of a tenant evicted in 1859, was described as the 'Parnell of Wales'. Ellis' movement Cymru Fydd (Young Wales) put forward a programme in 1886 advocating tenant rights, disestablishment and the abolition of tithes. The young David Lloyd George ran successfully as a Home Ruler for the Caernarfon borough in 1890. In 1892, Welsh members imitated the earlier obstructionist tactics of Parnell in the House of Commons. These developments are often seen as signs of a growing rift between Welsh and English Liberalism. Equally important, however, was the fact that 'Young Wales' focussed its attention exclusively upon the problems of the rural counties. It was the agrarian crisis of the years following 1879 which engaged their energies. They seemed to be uninterested in the problems of industrial Wales. There were the possibilities here of a division between industrial and rural areas comparable to that which came about in Ireland during the 1880s. That it did not occur was due in large measure to Lloyd George, who, more than Tom Ellis, deserves the title of 'Parnell of Wales' for his skill in keeping an uneasy coalition together.

Signs that the south might try to go its own way came after the failure of the coal strike of 1898. The decision to go on strike had been a defeat for the established leader of the miners, William Abrahams (nicknamed 'Mabon'), who preferred to use a sliding scale based upon the relationship between wages and the price of coal as the basis for negotiation with the mineowners. Mabon, a Welsh-speaking dissenter, strongly committed to Welsh cultural causes, represented a traditional Liberal approach to industrial relations. The failure of the strike brought a new departure. Influences from outside Wales began to make themselves felt. The Independent Labour party (independent from the Liberal party) sent organisers to south Wales. The English radical newspaper, Blatchford's *Clarion*, was placed on sale. The Scottish socialist Keir Hardie made regular trips to south Wales and denounced the leadership of 'Mabon'. In the 'Khaki' election of 1900, Keir Hardie was elected for one of Merthyr's two seats and became the first Labour member of parliament. Labour also ran against a Liberal candidate at Gower, though without success. In the 1905 local elections Labour did well, and in the 1906 general election miners' representatives were elected for Merthyr, Gower and South Glamorgan. In 1905 Mrs Snowden predicted that Wales, 'a hot bed of Liberalism and Nonconformity in the past . . . would become a hot bed of Socialism and real religion in the future' (K. O. Morgan, ed., *Wales in British Politics 1868–1922* (1963), p. 210).

This was the language of faith. The great majority of Welsh MPs were still Liberal. Indeed, the 1906 general election brought an overwhelming victory for the very forces which Mrs Snowden condemned. Lloyd George's 'People's budget' of 1909 brought him great popularity in Wales and the social democracy of the 'New Liberalism' was clearly directed to the problems of an industrial society. Labour candidates were defeated by Liberals in mid-Glamorgan and east Glamorgan in 1910 despite the bitter strikes of 1909 and the violence at Tonypandy in 1910, when a miner had been killed. The signals coming from south Wales were ambiguous. At Swansea the dockers' candidates came bottom of the poll. At Merthyr, the Scot Keir Hardie, though duly elected, polled fewer miners' votes than Edgar Jones, a Welsh-speaking Baptist. Syndicalism with its emphasis on direct industrial action was making some headway in the eastern valleys but there were few signs of the 'Strange Death of Liberal Wales'.

In Wales, as in Ireland, it was the war years which produced a decisive shift of direction, but the direction in which the two societies moved was very different. In southern Ireland, popular reaction to the 1916 Rising set in motion the rise of 'Sinn Fein' which in turn evoked the counter-nationalism of the Protestant north-east. At the end of the war Ireland was divided not by class but by culture. In Wales, by contrast, class became increasingly important and the ethnic and religious issues of the past moved into relative insignificance. Mounting tension in the coal fields in 1917 evoked pessimistic comments from the Commission of Enquiry set up to look into the problem. The success of the Russian revolution inspired enthusiasm among those whom critics termed the 'Bolsheviks of the south'. In the general election of 1918, however, Lloyd George's Liberals with twenty-one seats still enjoyed a comfortable majority over Labour which won ten seats. But the old Liberal issues had lost their hold. In 1919 a Welsh Disestablishment Act was passed which took this once emotional question out of politics. The tithe problem was solved at much the same time. The break-up of the great estates, which paralleled similar changes in England, removed one of the main targets of traditional Welsh Liberalism. The war also seems to have reduced the power of organised dissent and along with it the emotive power of the cause of temperance. The issues which had enabled the rural west to maintain its political dominance had lost their potency.

To all this must be added the sharp decline in the influence of Lloyd George. In 1918 as the architect of victory his position seemed almost unchallengeable, but his political power in south Wales was soon to be undermined by his handling of the problems of the coal fields. During the war the mines had been under government control and the miners hoped that this would lead to nationalisation. The Sankey Commission

which was set up in 1919 to discuss the matter did not reach a clear-cut decision and in March 1921 the Lloyd George government decided to hand back the mines to the owners. By this time the post-war boom was over. Unemployment had doubled between December 1920 and March 1921. The government decision not to nationalise the mines marked the end of Lloyd George's personal influence in south Wales. The miners went on strike and, though they were defeated, the Labour party reaped the benefits of Liberal decline in the elections of the 1920s. By 1929 Labour held twenty-five seats in Wales. After the war, the politics of class proved to be more important than the politics of religion and ethnicity. The balance shifted away from rural, Welsh-speaking counties to the industrial areas where English was strong and which looked to the Socialism of the Labour party. The nationalism of the south was to be expressed in the symbolism of sport, especially rugby football. National sentiment was satisfied in the south with the ritual 'slaughter' of English teams at Cardiff Arms Park.

In Scotland, up to the late eighteenth century the most significant cultural divide was that between Highlands and Lowlands. With the coming of the Industrial Revolution and the consequent growth of population in the Lowlands, however, the Highlands dropped into relative insignificance, although in the south the kilt and the tartan became symbols of Scottish cultural identity. Within the Lowlands itself the main split was between the heavily industrialised west centred upon Glasgow and its satellite towns, and the largely rural east, in which Edinburgh and Aberdeen were the 'capitals' and Dundee and the mining areas of the east coast were industrial outposts.

Though the contrast must not be pressed too far, 'east' and 'west' also enjoyed different political outlooks. In the industrial west, the Chamberlainite programme of disestablishment, free education and land reform carried a greater appeal than in the Whiggish east where the Liberal party was led by such landowners as Rosebery and Elgin. In the industrial cities of the west, the Free Church and the Voluntaries had coped more successfully than the 'Moderates' with the challenge of industrialisation. Liberalism, though dominant throughout Scotland for the period after 1832, was more radical in the 'west' than in the 'east', more 'Whiggish' in Edinburgh than in Glasgow.

As a corollary to this, 'No Popery' was stronger in the west where Irish immigration had been heaviest. The Maynooth Grant issue of 1845 carried as much resonance north of the border and especially in the west as it did in England. There was thus always the possibility later in the century that the 'No Popery' card could cause the Liberal party to become polarised along the west/east divide. Issues of class kept the Liberal party in existence in the sense that it was the anti-landlord and

anti-establishment party. Issues involving ethnic hostility, such as were raised by Home Rule in the 1880s, were a source of division.

From 1868, the odds seemed to favour a permanent Liberal majority in Scotland. Even in 1874, the year of an overall Conservative majority throughout the United Kingdom, Scottish Liberals took more seats than the Conservatives. In 1885 only eight Conservatives were elected out of a total of seventy Scottish MPs. Gladstone seemed well able to handle the internal divisions which arose inevitably in such a miscellaneous alliance. His critics declared that 'the Church people have swallowed Gladstone's soothing syrup'.

Gladstone's acceptance of Home Rule for Ireland in December 1885 transformed the situation in Scotland as it did elsewhere. Home Rule proved to be an issue which distracted attention away from disestablishment to the fear that 'Home Rule would mean Rome Rule'. The *Glasgow Herald* had begun to give expression to these fears in December 1885. In the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, the Liberal Unionist candidate for the College division expressed the view that, after Home Rule, Ireland might 'become the choice refuge of all the dynamitards of Europe'. Fears were expressed about the future of 'the merchants, the manufacturers, the bankers, the traders of Ulster who have made the North of Ireland what it is, trusting to the protection of the United Kingdom of which they are proud to be subjects'. In May 1886, representatives of the Irish Presbyterian Church told a meeting of Glasgow Liberal Unionists that Home Rule would lead to 'a Romish ascendancy' and to 'the ultimate extinction of Protestantism [in Ireland]'. In April, a collection was taken up at a huge Orange demonstration against Home Rule 'to assist men such as Dr. Hanna to stir up the people'. A Catholic chapel nearby was stoned and the Good Friday services were interrupted. In the election of 1886 the Unionists gained eleven seats in the west of Scotland, the Liberal Unionists nine. A mixture of ethnic, religious and economic issues had led to the defeat of Gladstonian Liberalism in the west of Scotland.

Home Rule remained an emotional issue in the 1890s. In 1893 the eighth duke of Argyll made a speech attacking Gladstone's second Home Rule Bill in which he declared:

I have been spending the last few weeks in a part of Scotland whence we can look down on the hills of Antrim. We can see the colour of their fields and in the sunset we can see the glancing of the light upon the windows of their cabins. This is the country, I thought the other day, which the greatest English statesman tells us must be governed as we govern the Antipodes. Was there ever such folly?

In this and other speeches Argyll played the card of ethnicity. 'Mr Gladstone says we are foreigners to the Irish. I say we are flesh of their flesh

and blood of their bone. We are responsible for their liberties and will not betray them . . . Above all remember your duty to your fellow countrymen across the Channel.'

Ethnic issues remained important in certain areas of industrial Scotland such as Greenock where the Orange Order was closely linked with the Conservatives. Increasingly, however, class issues came to the fore. In 1906 the number of Unionist seats fell from thirty-six to ten. In 1911 it was declared that 'Scotland has stood by the Liberal Government so solidly because it hates the House of Lords and the landlords.' With the advantage of hindsight, however, it is possible to see that given the right circumstances, the radical Liberalism of the west and the Whiggish Liberalism of the east might divide.

Many thousands of miles away from Scotland and Ireland, the cultural tensions of the British Isles were reproduced in parts of the empire. As we have seen, the English empire in North America achieved independence from the mother country, leaving only Canada and the West Indies tied formally to the United Kingdom. During the course of the nineteenth century, however, emigration from the British Isles took place on a grand scale. The United States was the most popular destination for British Isles emigrants but Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the South African colonies of Cape Province, Natal and, eventually, parts of the Transvaal also came to attract many thousands of settlers. In the early twentieth century, Rhodesia and Kenya also became colonies controlled by white settlers from the British Isles. India and West Africa drew only civil servants or missionaries, and the direct impact of the cultures of the British Isles as distinct from government policy was correspondingly much less. Nonetheless, it could be a matter of some significance for the future whether the missionaries were Irish Catholics, Scottish Presbyterians or Anglicans from England.

In Canada the cultures of the British Isles were all strongly represented, from the Gaelic-speaking Highlanders of Prince Edward and Cape Breton islands to the Waterford fishermen of St Johns, Newfoundland. Ontario, which was exposed to the threat of Fenian invasion in the 1860s, became a centre of 'Orangeism' and anti-Gladstone feeling. Such figures as Bonar Law, leader of the Conservative party from 1911 to 1923, and Lord Beaverbrook, who was born in New Brunswick, were products of this Canadian Unionist tradition. J. K. Galbraith, in his autobiography *The Scotch* (1963), has described the outlook of a rural Ontario culture which had its roots in Ulster. Tension between English-speaking Ontario and French-speaking Quebec provides a major theme of Canadian history but political and religious differences deriving from the cultural history of the British Isles also formed an essential element in the 'Canadian Mosaic'.

The history of Australia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was also strongly influenced by attitudes which originated in the interaction of the cultures of the British Isles. New South Wales was founded as a penal colony in 1788 and together with Tasmania became the reception area for thousands of convicts, among whom were many Irishmen sentenced to transportation after the 1798 rebellion or the many outbreaks of rural disorder in Ireland during the early nineteenth century. In view of this it was inevitable that Irish nationalism should find a second home in Australia. It was almost equally inevitable that Unionism or 'Orangeism' should reach a sympathetic audience among other sections of the population.

Most of the cultures of the British Isles were represented in nineteenth-century Australia. English culture was dominant but the popularity of St Patrick's Day as a public holiday in many areas indicated a significant Irish presence. In proportion to the population, there were twice as many Catholics, mainly of Irish descent, in Australia as in England. In New South Wales in the mid-nineteenth century, the Irish amounted to one third of the population. In 1842 the governor of New South Wales wrote in support of the appointment of an English Catholic bishop: 'It is most important that an Englishman should have the preference, the Catholics being, I believe, all Irish.'

The rise of Fenianism had some repercussions in Australia especially after the attempted assassination of the duke of Edinburgh in 1867. It was widely believed at the time that the assassin, Patrick O Farrell, was part of a Fenian network, and in Melbourne particularly this gave rise to anti-Irish demonstrations, and the establishment of a Protestant Political Association. The rise of the Home Rule issue in the United Kingdom from the 1880s onwards also had political effects in Australia. At an Orange Lodge meeting in 1914 at Melbourne Town Hall during the Home Rule crisis at Westminster one speaker declared that 'The victory on the Boyne had been a victory, not only for Ireland, but the civil and religious liberty throughout the world.' Edward Carson was seen as 'another William III'. In 1916, government attempts to introduce conscription were defeated by the pro-Irish lobby. Mannix, the Irish-born archbishop of Melbourne, was regarded as so dangerous that he was refused permission to land in Ireland during the post-war 'Troubles'. It is clearly impossible to understand the *mentalité* of Australia during this period without adopting a British Isles approach.

The same point may also be made about New Zealand, where emigrants from England, Scotland and Ireland set the tone. The Anglican and Presbyterian religious traditions were both strongly represented. The Catholic bishop of Dunedin declared 'In Otago it is Presbyterian

Protestantism: in Canterbury, Anglican Protestantism: and in Wellington, Protestantism of any and every kind.' In the province of Otago, the Free Church of Scotland predominated, as the name of Port Chalmers, commemorating the leader of the 'Disruption', suggested. But throughout New Zealand, the Irish, of either Catholic or Protestant background, were also an important element in society. The problems of Ireland after 1916 led to the formation of a Protestant Political Association in New Zealand which was pledged to fight 'Rum, Romanism and Rebellion'. The election of 1919 was fought on sectarian issues and the Conservative 'Reformer' Massey, who had negotiated an informal alliance with the PPA, gained an overall majority over his Liberal and Labour opponents.

Apart from political issues relating to Ireland, temperance, Sabbatarianism and the place of Bible-teaching in the schools were as important in New Zealand politics as they were in the United Kingdom itself. The Protestant Churches repeatedly mounted moral crusades which were designed to preserve 'the fitness of the race . . . the safety of the streets and the security of the family'. In all this the influence of the cultural divisions of Ireland loomed large. 'Well into the twentieth century', it has been said, 'the Anglo-Irish, the Scots-Irish and the Catholic Irish [in New Zealand] viewed each other suspiciously through the kaleidoscope of Irish history.'

In August 1914 a war broke out in Europe which was expected to be over within a short time but which in the event lasted for over four years. Inevitably such a prolonged conflict carried with it immense political, social and economic consequences for the United Kingdom as it did for the British empire. Broadly speaking throughout most of the British Isles, the war had the effect of reducing the importance of ethno-religious issues and placing 'class' at the centre of politics. In Wales and Scotland, after 1918, disestablishment was carried out without fuss. The creation of the Irish Free State in 1922 removed the highly emotional issue of 'Home Rule' from British politics. Ethnic hostility remained strong at the local level in such cities as Glasgow and Liverpool. In national politics, however, the Irish issue in the sense that it had existed since the Act of Union of 1801 ceased to be relevant.

Wales and Scotland found themselves caught up within the general pattern of class politics. The industrialised areas of south Wales and of west Scotland provided solid support for a rejuvenated Labour party which took over the political inheritance of Liberal radicalism in Wales and Scotland as it did in England.

The great exception to this shift from ethno-religious to class politics was Ireland, where north and south divided upon largely ethnic lines. In 1914, the Protestants of Ulster had been willing to go to the brink of civil

war in order to preserve the Union. In September 1914, however, the Home Rule Bill became law, though it was not put into effect because of the war. Home Rule, within a United Kingdom, seemed to be the most likely future for Ireland. In 1916, however, the Sinn Fein rebellion set in train a course of events which led to the overthrow of John Redmond's moderate nationalist party and ultimately, after three years of military struggle (1919–22), to the partition of Ireland between the six counties of Northern Ireland and the twenty-six counties of the Irish Free State.

Within each polity, ethno-cultural issues took precedence over class. Socialists had taken part in the Irish Rising of 1916 but Socialism found no place in the Irish Free State. Within the six counties of Northern Ireland the supremacy of the Unionist party rested upon the war cry of 'No Surrender' which could be relied upon to outflank any appeal to class issues among the electorate. For fifty years the politics of Northern Ireland remained frozen in an ethno-religious mould, with a two-thirds majority of Protestants maintaining its unity against the supposed threat presented by the Catholic minority.

In England itself the affluent south-east provided a secure basis of Conservative political power. The Liberal party, divided between its radical and its 'Whiggish' wings, gradually ceased to exist as a serious political force. English politics, like those of Wales and Ireland, were increasingly based upon class issues, although the Conservatives were always able to draw upon working-class Toryism in areas such as Liverpool and Glasgow where ethno-religious issues still had some life. Even here, however, class unity on occasion could outweigh ethnic diversity. In Liverpool during the transport strike of 1911 an observer noted how 'from Orange Garston, from Roman Catholic Bootle and the Scotland Road area, they come. Forgotten were their religious feuds . . . The Garston band had walked five miles and their drum-major proudly whirled his sceptre twined with orange and green ribbons as he led his contingent band, half out of the Roman Catholic, half out of the local Orange band.' In broad terms, however, one of the most lasting effects of the First World War was the creation of a system of British politics in which Irish issues, northern or southern, ceased to count.

Postscript

As I revise Chapter 10 for a new edition, I am conscious that England needs much more emphasis than I provided. George Dangerfield, in his book *The Strange Death of Liberal England*, drew attention to the importance not merely of Ireland but also of labour unrest and feminist agitation in the years before the First World War. These questions clearly require far

more analysis than was given here. I also tend to ignore the significance of the First World War for English politics. The split between Asquith and Lloyd George in 1916 led to a permanent divide in the Liberal party, making possible the return of the Conservatives to power after the war and the rise of Labour. The Irish Question was not the whole story.

I am also conscious, however, that more attention should have been given to the 'advanced nationalism' of Sinn Fein and other groups. Recent work by Irish historians has now made this possible. Patrick Maume has brought out the significance of the 'Irish-Ireland' movement led by D. P. Moran. His study of Daniel Corkery in *Life that is Exile: Daniel Corkery and the Search for Irish Ireland* (Belfast, 1993) is also very illuminating. Senia Paseta, in her brilliant study *Before the Revolution: Nationalism, Social Change and Ireland's Catholic Elite* (Cork, 1999), provides an invaluable guide to the various currents of thought among the emerging Catholic elite. Tom Garvin, in *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland, 1858–1928* (Oxford, 1987), also makes an important contribution, as does Michael Laffan in *The Resurrection of Ireland: The Sinn Fein Party 1916–1923* (Cambridge, 1999). A 'revisionist' study of Patrick Pearse by Ruth Dudley Edwards in *Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure* (London, 1977) has given rise to a fierce debate which may be followed in Ciaran Brady, ed., *Interpreting Irish History: The Debate on Historical Revisionism* (Dublin, 1994) and D. George Boyce and Alan O Day, eds., *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy* (London, 1996).

So far as Wales and Scotland are concerned I have found Dai Smith's *Wales! Wales?* (London, 1984) and Tom Devine's *The Scottish Nation 1700–2000* (London, 1999) most illuminating.

11 Between the wars

The World War of 1914–18 undoubtedly had a profound impact upon Great Britain and Ireland and it is tempting to see it as a watershed of revolution. On balance, however, despite the undoubted changes which occurred, the period between 1918 and 1939 appears more as an interlude in which old and new elements were still intermingled and the future of Britain and Ireland was still unclear. It was still presumed, for example, that Britain was a great world power, an attitude which seemed persuasive because of the fact that the United States and the Soviet Union largely retreated from their full roles in world affairs. The real weakness of the British empire was not to be exposed until 1940 when it became clear that Britain was dependent upon American aid for the continuance of the war.

Of the internal changes which occurred within the British Isles during this period one of the most important was the emancipation of women, although the impact of this varied throughout 'the British Isles'. It was most marked in southern England, less so in northern England and least of all in Ireland, particularly in the newly established Irish Free State.

In the context of the history of the United Kingdom, the impact of the First World War in 1914 had been to arouse a sense of 'Britishness' among many sections of the population. The war was seen as fought in a just cause for the rights of small nations and there was a huge surge of volunteers throughout Britain and Ireland in 1914. Home Rule seemed a real possibility to such Irishmen as Tom Kettle, a brilliant young politician who died on the Western Front. What changed all this was the Dublin Rising of 1916, when a group of 'advanced' nationalists led by Patrick Pearse took control of the General Post Office in Dublin and proclaimed an Irish Republic.

The rebels were booed in the streets by Dubliners when they surrendered but sympathy soon swung around to them when their leaders were executed singly over two weeks. The date '1916' throughout most of the United Kingdom came to signify the heroic sacrifice of the battle of the Somme (in which many Irish troops took part). In Catholic Ireland, however, '1916' increasingly took on a different connotation. In the words

of W.B. Yeats, 'All was changed, changed utterly, A terrible beauty was born.' In Protestant Ireland, and especially in Ulster, the date '1916' referred to the heroism of the Ulster division in 1916. Thus, within the United Kingdom, a bitter division opened up which was the British and Irish equivalent of the changes which took place within central and eastern Europe. An Irish nation-state took shape, claiming roots in the past, but in fact the equivalent of other 'imagined communities', which gained their independence after 1918. Within most of the United Kingdom a sense of common Britishness developed more deeply, symbolised by the Cenotaph on Whitehall or the tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Westminister Abbey. In England this was increasingly a non-sectarian identity. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, however, being 'British' still implied a strongly Protestant dimension. The newly established Irish Free State in contrast moved rapidly towards a Catholic, Gaelic identity.

In Ireland, the election of 1918 had seen the destruction of John Redmond's Irish parliamentary party with its policy of Home Rule. It was replaced (in the south) by the more 'advanced' nationalist party of Sinn Fein whose members refused to take up its seats in the Westminster parliament. By 1919, there was open violence which led to atrocities on both British and Irish sides, culminating in the events of 'Bloody Sunday' (21 November 1920). There was, however, no outright victory for either side and by the end of 1921 both were glad to accept a compromise. The result of three years of guerrilla warfare was the partition of Ireland into the Irish Free State consisting of twenty-six counties including three belonging to the traditional province of Ulster (Monaghan, Cavan and Donegal) and six counties of 'Northern Ireland', which were given a measure of 'Home Rule'. For some nationalists, however, the Treaty of 1921 seemed like a betrayal of the ideals of 1916 and a bitter division developed between a pro-Treaty party of Michael Collins and an anti-Treaty party led by Eamonn De Valera. The civil war which followed created profound divisions which had a lasting effect, one of which was to ensure the survival of the six-county unit of Northern Ireland.

The Irish crisis of 1919–22 rarely receives its due from English historians. In fact, however, the prolonged and bitter struggle between the British government and the forces of Sinn Fein had wide repercussions not merely within the British Commonwealth but also in the United States.

Within the Conservative party a split developed between the official leadership headed by F. E. Smith and Austen Chamberlain who came to accept, reluctantly, the need for compromise with Sinn Fein, and the 'Die-hards' who regarded the Treaty as a 'Scuttle'. In June 1922, Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, an Anglo-Irishman who in 1914 had been

Figure 34. *Eamonn De Valera (1882–1975)*
This image of Eamonn De Valera illustrates his role as an elder statesman
at the end of his long career. A controversial figure, his vision of a Gaelic-
speaking Ireland set the tone for many aspects of life within the Irish Free
State after 1932. His successor Sean Lemass (1879–1971) represented
a very different vision of Ireland, one which eventually found expression
in the economic successes of 'the Celtic Tiger'.

involved in the 'Mutiny on the Curragh', was assassinated by a splinter
group of Irish nationalists. Leo Amery wrote:

Down to the House hearing, just before the end of questions, of Henry Wilson's
assassination. The whole House very much upset and adjourned at once. I have
lost one of my best friends and his death raises in my mind again all the doubts I
have felt about the whole hateful Irish business. I cannot help feeling that it is to
these very men that we have handed over Ireland.

The issues raised by the prospect of Irish independence undoubtedly strengthened the hand of the 'Die-hards' within the Conservative party and helped to bring down the Lloyd George Liberal-Conservative coalition at the end of 1922. The way was clear for a Conservative party in which men sympathetic to business, such as Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain, would have a much greater say. Salisbury's cabinet in 1895 was filled to overflowing with marquesses, dukes, earls and barons. With the victory of Baldwin over his noble rival, Lord Curzon, the balance tilted towards the world of business.

Perhaps more important than the Irish crisis itself was the long-term effect of Irish withdrawal from Westminster. Since 1801 there had been an active Irish presence in parliament and Irish issues possessed a centrality which successive British governments had been unable to ignore. From 1922, however, after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, Ireland, north and south, in effect dropped below the political horizon. There were periods, notably during the 1930s and the war years, when the British government and the Free State were at loggerheads, but Irish questions no longer dominated the political scene as they had done at intervals since the Union. The absence of eighty-plus Irish nationalist members deprived the Liberals of their 'natural' allies and made a Liberal recovery more difficult.

The full implications of the establishment of an independent Irish Free State were slow to appear, however. 'Ireland' was still in theory a member of the British Commonwealth and even Mr De Valera when he drew up a new Irish constitution in 1937 left room for Ireland's 'external association' with the Commonwealth. The Treaty itself had been drawn up on the assumption that the partition of Ireland would not be permanent. It was perhaps not until 'Eire' adopted a neutral stance during the war of 1939–45 that attitudes finally hardened.

The Irish revolution of 1916–22 brought political changes which were the nearest approximation within the British Isles to those of central and eastern Europe. Ireland, however, remained very much the political exception. In England, Scotland and Wales, the war did not have the social repercussions which many anticipated. A wave of strikes in the immediate post-war years had little effect and the General Strike of 1926 petered out after a week. The two decades before the outbreak of the Second World War were on the whole an age of isolationism, in which the majority of the population wanted at almost all costs to avoid a recurrence of the mass slaughter on the Western Front. Another wartime event, the Russian revolution of 1917, also had lasting consequences during the post-war period. Conservatives were able to play as successfully upon the general fear of 'Bolshevism' as they had upon 'Home Rule' in the 1880s.

In 1923 Stanley Baldwin became leader of the Conservative party, in succession to Bonar Law. Baldwin self-consciously created the image of a politician more interested in domestic tranquillity (the equivalent of America's 'normalcy') than in world politics. In so doing, his aim was to counter the main asset upon which his Liberal rival Lloyd George relied, i.e. his status as a key figure in international politics, organiser of victory in the war and of the peace which followed. Baldwin won most seats in the 1923 election but was forced to yield power to Labour. In 1924, however, he won a resounding victory and remained in power until 1929. During the 1930s he once more became Prime Minister, during the troubled years which followed the 1931 financial crisis.

The Conservative party which Baldwin and later Chamberlain led was very much the party of south-eastern England. Here lay its electoral strength, in the suburban middle class of outer London and the Home Counties. One of the long-term effects of the war, indeed, had been to upset the economic balance of power within the British Isles. Northern England, south Wales and Clydeside (and Belfast) were no longer the 'booming' areas of Britain. As was to become clear during the rest of the twentieth century, the First World War marked the beginning of yet another period of dominance by London and the south-east, a dominance symbolised by the decision of the Bank of England to restore the Gold Standard in 1925, which had the unforeseen consequence of impeding economic recovery in the north and west.

Stanley Baldwin may have led a party whose strength lay in the suburban middle class. His own rhetoric, however, revealed in the volume of his speeches *On England* which ran into six editions during the year 1926–7, struck a note of English nationalism. He recalled Disraeli in a speech made in 1924: 'I want to see the spirit of service to the whole nation [as] the birthright of every member of the Unionist Party – Unionist in the sense that we stand for the union of those nations of which Disraeli spoke two generations ago ... to make one nation of our people.' In a speech made after Curzon's death in 1925 he spoke of 'the same spirit that would have been welcomed by Young England in the days of Disraeli's youth, of which period, in many ways he seemed to be a member'. In another speech he stated: 'My party has no political bible. Possibly you might find our ideals expressed in one of Disraeli's novels.' Repeatedly his rhetoric referred to an exclusively English past in a way which would have been impossible for the Welshman Lloyd George or for the Scot Ramsay MacDonald (or Campbell-Bannerman). In Baldwin's speeches the most consistent note is that of English nationalism.

The power of managing our own affairs in our own way is the greatest gift of Englishmen.

   Nowhere was the village community so real and so enduring a thing as it was in England for at least three centuries of its history ... to these twelve centuries of discipline we owe the peculiar English capacity for self-government.

   But though Baldwin spoke in the name of England the strength of the Unionist party lay in the south of England. When it came to the point of a trial of strength between south and north, as it did in the General Strike of 1926, Baldwin acted in the interests of the south.

   The rhetoric of the Conservative party during these years was based upon a threefold appeal – to English nationalism, to the fear of Socialism and to pride in the British empire. Labour was portrayed by Baldwin as a party dominated by foreign ideas. 'Many of those [he declared] who have been eager for the progress of our country have only succeeded in befogging themselves and their fellow countrymen, by filling their bellies with the east wind of German Socialism and Russian Communism and French Syndicalism.'

   Within the Labour party itself there was a struggle for dominance between its leader Ramsay MacDonald, who favoured a 'gradualist' approach to social change, and the 'Clydesiders' led by Maxton and Wheatley, who pressed for radical socialist solutions to the problem of unemployment. During the months leading up to the 1929 election MacDonald came off best. In drawing up the party manifesto he was helped by R. H. Tawney, Professor of Economic History at the London School of Economics and a former member of the progressive wing of the Liberal party in the pre-war period.

   In Tawney's approach to English history, there was a clear contrast with that of Stanley Baldwin (and of Baldwin's friend G.M. Trevelyan). In a series of studies of which the most notable were *The Acquisitive Society* (1921), *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1926) and *Equality* (1931) he produced an interpretation of history in which exploitation rather than freedom was seen as the chief characteristic of English history. Of the Church of England he wrote: 'Deprived of its vitality, it had allowed its officers to become by the eighteenth century the servile clients of a half-pagan aristocracy, to whose contemptuous indulgence they looked for preferment. It ceased for some 200 years to speak its mind and, as a natural consequence, it ceased to have a mind to speak.' About nonconformity he was equally dismissive: 'The personal piety of the Nonconformist could stem that creed – ("a persuasive self-confident and militant Gospel proclaiming the absolute value of economic success") – [but] with a few individual exceptions they did not try to stem it, for they had lost the spiritual independence needed to appraise its true moral significance.'

Tawney's vision of an ideal society was one which approximated in some way to that of the medieval social order when moral restraints had been placed upon economic appetites.

Behind the rhetoric of Baldwin and Tawney there lay the inescapable fact of mass unemployment in northern England, south Wales, Clydeside and Belfast. All of these had been areas of economic expansion before the war and it was presumed at first that any setbacks would be temporary. Looking back from 1929 one Lancashire observer recalled the extraordinary confidence of the period before 1914. He quoted a cotton manufacturer's views about Lancashire superiority.

My lad, never again let anybody in Lancashire hear you talk all this childish stuff about foreign competition. It's right enough for Londoners and such like but it puts a born Lancashire man to shame as an ignoramus. It's just twaddle. In the first place, we've got the only climate in the world where cotton pieces in any quantity can ever be produced. In the second place, no foreign Johnnies can ever be bred that can spin and weave like Lancashire lasses and lads. In the third place, there are more spindles in Oldham than in all the rest of the world put together. And last of all, if they had the climate and the men and the spindles – which they never can have – foreigners could never find the brains Lancashire cotton men have for the job. We've been making all the world's cotton cloth that matters for more years than I can tell and we always shall.

This outlook did not survive the post-war depression when unemployment in the cotton industry became endemic, rising to over 40 per cent in 1930. What happened to cotton happened also in shipbuilding, towns such as Barrow and Jarrow being particularly hard hit.

Culturally, Walter Greenwood's novel *Love on the Dole* (1933) reflects the mood of depression in northern England. The songs of Gracie Fields in *Sing as We Go* (1934) were an attempt to raise morale in the north, but observers such as George Orwell and J. B. Priestley on their visits to the northern cities found a deep-seated malaise. The hunger marches made by the Jarrow unemployed in 1936 were one way of attempting to cope with the situation. Another was to emigrate to the prosperous industrial areas of the south.

The politics of the inter-war period revolved around the contrast between the south-east and the depressed areas of the north and west. The north (and its associated areas) had been the product of an age of coal and iron, industries which were hit by the new technology of oil, electrical power and chemical engineering. During the First World War these new industries found a home in the south, where they were nearer to the Channel ports and the Western Front. As a consequence, it was southern towns such as Bristol, Gloucester, Oxford, Luton and Slough

which became centres of the automobile and aircraft industries and the new light industries. Coventry became part of the 'new south'. Statistics relating to unemployment during the 1920s and 1930s indicate that rates were much higher for the older industries of the north than the new industries of the south. In the coal-mining areas unemployment was well over 30 per cent in 1932 and 1933 and over 20 per cent for much of the time. In 1939 it was still over 12 per cent. In the shipbuilding industry, there was 62 per cent unemployment in 1932 and it was still at the rate of 20 per cent in 1939. Similar rates applied to dock-workers, and to workers in linen and cotton textiles. The new southern industries were more fortunate. For much of the period unemployment among the electrical engineers was under 10 per cent. From 1936 it was under 5 per cent. The same was true of the industries involving the construction and repair of cars, aircraft and cycles. Service industries also did well in the south. Statistics relating to unemployment in individual towns tell the same story.

The North, Scotland and Wales		The south	
Jarrow	67.8%	Luton	7.7%
Merthyr	61.9%	Coventry	5.1%
Maryport	57.0%	Oxford	5.1%
Motherwell	37.4%	St Albans	3.9%

Economically the period after the First World War was marked by substantial change, when what had once been 'boom' areas were affected by economic depression. Politically also the post-war scene was markedly different from what it had been before 1914. After the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1922, the Irish dimension in British politics ceased to occupy its once central position. Religious issues also became of marginal importance. In particular, nonconformity, for so long a major force in the Liberal politics of northern England and Wales, increasingly lost ground. The bitter split within the Liberal party between the followers of Asquith and Lloyd George left many nonconformists without obvious political allegiance. For some, Conservatism became increasingly attractive in the face of the growth of Socialism, and Stanley Baldwin, in his speeches, went to some pains to stress his nonconformist background. In 1924 he spoke to the National Free Church Conference, stating that 'I owe a great deal of my public and private life to my Nonconformist ancestry.' 'No less than half my great grandfathers', he declared 'were

Presidents of Conference [and] one was a follower of John Wesley.' In 1926 he appealed to the Wesleyans, saying that 'There is nothing this country needs so much as another Wesley or Whitefield.'

Many nonconformists, such as Kingsley Wood, a Wesleyan, gravitated towards the Conservative party, out of fear of Socialism. Others found a home in the Labour party. Ernest Bevin was a Baptist lay preacher, as was Arthur Cook, the miners' leader. Aneurin Bevan was the son of Welsh Baptists. Arthur Henderson was a Wesleyan lay preacher, Philip Snowden was a Wesleyan. Within the context of the British Isles, the Labour party thus inherited part of the mantle of the Liberal party in the sense that it drew far more for its support upon 'Outer Britain'. If the Conservative heartland was the south-east, and in parts of Scotland, that of Labour was northern England, south Wales and Clydeside, all of them heavily industrialised areas.

The appeal of the post-war Labour party was, however, more limited than that of the pre-war Liberal party, its predecessor as the party of 'the left'. In Scotland, before the war, the Liberal party had been able to rely upon support in the rural east as well as the industrialised west, and in Wales upon the rural north as well as the industrialised south. During the post-war years, however, Labour found it difficult to make headway in the rural areas. In Scotland from 1924 the Conservatives did well in the east, where farmers reacted against the growth of trade unionism among the farm labourers, and in north Wales, the Liberal party maintained its position in part at least because of nonconformist fears about the growth of Socialism in south Wales.

The tensions between 'Inner Britain' (i.e. the south-east) and 'Outer Britain' (northern England, south Wales and Clydeside) reached a climax in the General Strike of 1926. Large-scale strikes had already occurred before the war and they continued after it in industries such as mining and shipbuilding which were seriously affected by the post-war depression. The General Strike was made possible, though not inevitable, by the deflation which followed upon the Conservative government decision to return to the Gold Standard in 1925.

The General Strike, so often viewed in purely English terms, was very much a struggle between Inner and Outer Britain. The strength of the government rested in large measure upon its control of the communication network of Inner Britain, with its centre in London. The strike drew its support in the main from the industrial north, Clydeside and south Wales, with the East End of London as an additional bastion. In Scotland there was a contrast between the east, exemplified by Edinburgh, where the strike failed disastrously, and the west, where such towns as Motherwell, Hamilton and the Vale of Leven were solidly behind it. In

Wales, the north remained aloof from the strike, while the south, in contrast, was largely in favour. In south Wales, however, there were clashes in the coastal cities of Cardiff, Swansea and Newport between pro- and anti-strike groups.

The General Strike collapsed after a week, leaving bitter memories, especially among the miners, who continued their resistance long after the other unions had capitulated. Within the Labour party the failure of the strike helped the cause of the 'gradualists' led by MacDonald. The General Strike may also be seen as highlighting in dramatic fashion the tensions which existed within Britain between an increasingly prosperous and powerful south-east and a depressed north and east. It was a pattern which was temporarily reversed during the Second World War when Britain depended for its survival upon its Atlantic ports and its traditional industries, especially shipbuilding and mining. After the war the victory of Labour restored the influence of the periphery, in the persons of such cabinet ministers as Emmanuel Shinwell (of Glasgow Jewish background), Aneurin Bevan (from Tredegar in south Wales) and Harold Wilson (of Yorkshire nonconformist background). After the victory of the Conservatives in 1951, however, the drift to the south-east once more picked up momentum, accentuated by the decision to apply to enter the European Economic Community in 1962.

For much of the inter-war period Ireland, both north and south, remained largely insulated from the course of events on the other side of the Irish Sea. Economically, Ireland, north and south, was as depressed as Wales, Scotland and northern England. In Belfast, employment in the shipbuilding yards, heavily dominated by a Protestant labour force, fell from 20,000 in 1924 to 2,000 in 1933. The linen industry enjoyed some degree of prosperity in the early 1920s as a result of American demand but after 1927 it also declined. In 1937 there were only 15,000 linen workers in Belfast, less than one third of the numbers in 1927. The Irish Free State was also badly hit during the depression though the extent of unemployment was partially concealed by underemployment in the rural areas, where the great majority of the population lived. When De Valera came to power in 1932 a tariff war broke out with Britain over the payment of annuities due under the Land Acts of an earlier period. The decision of the Irish Free State to remain neutral during the Second World War acted as an obstacle to economic development.

Culturally also both the Free State and Northern Ireland remained isolated. Within the Free State, Church and State were in general agreement about the need to keep Ireland uncontaminated from the pressures of 'modernity'. Divorce and contraception were prohibited and a stringent

system of literary censorship was enforced. Partition, though rejected in theory, was tacitly accepted on the grounds that it made possible the development of Ireland as a 'Catholic' society. Neutrality during wartime accentuated the trend towards cultural isolation. In a wartime broadcast De Valera spoke eloquently of how 'That Ireland which we dreamed of would be the home of a people who valued material wealth only as a basis for right living, of a people who were satisfied with frugal comfort and devoted their leisure to the things of the spirit.' In 1972, however, this pre-industrial vision was to be decisively rejected when the population of the Republic voted overwhelmingly in favour of joining the EEC.

In the Irish Free State, Catholicism was the religion of the great majority. In Northern Ireland, two-thirds of the population were Protestant and one third Catholic. As it became clear that partition was likely to be a permanent feature of Irish life for the foreseeable future, a situation was created in which the two cultures lived side by side with a minimum of social contact. Each had its own churches, schools, newspapers and forms of recreation. In small towns, Protestant and Catholic grocers had their own clientèle. For one community, soccer and rugby were appropriate games, for the other, Gaelic football and hurling. Each had its own interpretation of Irish history. At Queen's University, Belfast, Irish history began with Elizabeth. In Catholic colleges, the Gaelic past received its share of attention. In mixed rural areas, as Rosemary Harris' study of Ballygawley has shown, a complex and subtle system of relationships came into existence in which both sides took great pains to avoid causing offence.

From time to time, the IRA, a legacy from the days of Fenianism, attempted 'offensive' operations to overthrow partition. The main consequence of these episodes, however, was to confirm the Unionists in their entrenched position, backed as they were by a Special Powers Act and an armed constabulary. At times of general elections to the Northern Ireland parliament, official rhetoric ('A Protestant Parliament for a Protestant People') easily overcame any attempt to introduce class-based politics on the British model.

In Wales and Scotland, after the end of the war, legislative reforms removed the sense of grievance which had provided support for the Liberal party. In 1920, with the backing of Lloyd George, the Church of Wales was disestablished, in a reform which marked the culmination of a series of changes which had begun in 1881 with the Welsh Temperance Act. Anti-landlordism, linked with anti-English feeling, also ceased to be a live political issue as the large landed estates in Wales were split up and sold. Over a quarter of the land in Wales changed hands, a social shift of the highest importance. Specifically Welsh issues lost much of

'Figure 35 is not available in this edition of The British Isles'

Figure 35. *Hunger March*
The Hunger Marches of the 1930s were the response of those areas
which were hard hit by economic decline and massive unemployment.
Their aim was to bring pressure to bear on the National (Conservative)
government. A more prosperous aspect of the decade was found in the
midlands and south where new industries were established.

their appeal. Chapel membership declined. In effect the Welsh had been
granted a large measure of 'Home Rule' under the aegis of a Welsh-
speaking, temperance-minded, nonconformist middle class, with which
power and status now rested.

There was little support during these years for the Welsh Nationalist
party (Plaid Cymru) which had emerged during the 1920s. Its leader
Saunders Lewis became a Roman Catholic in 1932, hardly a sure recipe
for political success in nonconformist Wales. The party itself admired
the conservative French group Action Française and looked back to an
idealised medieval social order as a model for Wales to follow. In some
ways, Saunders Lewis indeed was the Welsh equivalent of Eamonn De
Valera.

If Wales enjoyed a considerable degree of 'Home Rule' during this
period so also did Scotland. The Scottish legal and educational systems
retained their traditional distinctiveness. The Church of Scotland also

remained influential. In 1929 prolonged negotiations between the Church of Scotland and the United Free Churches ended in agreement, leaving only a minority group, the 'Wee Frees', outside the main Presbyterian fold. The 'Disruption' had come to an end. In law, religion and education national symbols existed, acceptable to the great majority. The Education Act of 1918, providing state assistance for building and maintaining Roman Catholic schools, met the grievances of the immigrant minority. Insistence upon teachers at secondary level possessing a four-year degree effectively excluded immigration of English-trained teachers. The symbolic independence of Scotland was recognised by the formal visits of the Royal Family to Holyroodhouse. In England, the King was head of the Church. In Scotland, he was merely a member of the Church of Scotland.

In such circumstances it was not surprising that a more 'advanced' nationalism should have little appeal. A Scottish National party was formed in 1934 on the basis of two groups founded earlier, the Scottish party and the National party. It failed to make much headway in the 1935 election, its best result being in the Western Isles with 28 per cent of the vote, its worst in Greenock with 3.3 per cent. The Labour party did toy with the idea of Home Rule in the early 1920s but by 1925 had moved away from it. The Labour leader Ramsay MacDonald, though himself a Scot, displayed a distinct lack of enthusiasm for the nationalist cause. Labour in Scotland as in Wales saw its future as part of a wider socialist movement in Britain.

In Scotland throughout this period political issues to some extent revolved around questions of ethnicity, partly in reaction to the presence of large numbers of Irish immigrants. In 1922, within the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, a 'Church and Nation' committee was set up to discuss 'The Menace of the Irish Race to our Scottish Nationality'. In response, Scottish Catholics of Irish background turned towards the Labour party. Ethnic rivalries remained of great significance, in both the workplace and football, where Celtic and Rangers represented differing religious affiliations. In the Glasgow constituency of Kelvingrove, politics still had ethnic overtones and in Edinburgh during the 1930s 'No Popery' once again became a live issue. In contrast with the Irish nationalism of the pre-1914 period, however, Catholics, who amounted to 25 per cent of the population in some areas, voted consistently for Labour. And until the late twentieth century Catholics showed little enthusiasm for the Scottish Nationalist Party.

The majority of Scots lived in the central Lowlands and it was there that the main clash of Labour and Conservatives (Unionists) took place. The Highlands may be seen as the Scottish equivalent of north Wales.

It was there, as in north Wales, that nonconformity in the shape of the 'Wee Frees' predominated, and that issues of language, temperance and Sabbatarianism were central. The Borders also had their own distinctive character.

Ethnic questions which had exercised so powerful a gravitational pull upon the politics of the British Isles during the late nineteenth century began to lose ground in the twentieth. The Liberal party had drawn much of its strength from the sense of 'relative deprivation' which various groupings in Ireland, Scotland and Wales experienced. In one way or another, these grievances had been met in the immediate post-1918 period. The challenge of Socialism now became a key issue linking nonconformists with the Established Church. Outside Scotland, Catholics also were suspicious of the Left. Outside Ireland, class-based politics thus became the norm.

Perhaps the one great exception to this in England was Liverpool where the politics of ethnicity survived until after the Second World War. A Catholic did not become Lord Mayor of Liverpool until 1944. T. P. O Connor, the Irish nationalist MP for the Scotland division of Liverpool, thought that the likelihood of this happening was as good as the chance of a Christian becoming Caliph of Baghdad. A tacit alliance between the Conservative 'Tammany Hall'-style organisation and Protestant party led by H. D. Longbottom, long-serving chaplain to the Orange Order, led to a split in the working-class vote, comparable to that which occurred in Belfast. As late as 1948, Dr Heenan, Catholic archbishop of Liverpool, was stoned in the Scotland Road area. But the ethnic politics of Liverpool were increasingly untypical of the rest of England. For this period at least, Peter Pulzer's uncompromising generalisation is justified: 'the basis of [English] politics is class – all else is embellishment and detail!' (*Political Representation and Politics in Britain* (London, 1972), p. 44), though what was true of England was not necessarily the case in other parts of the British Isles.

12 Withdrawal from empire

Winston Churchill once declared that he had not become the King's chief minister to preside over the dissolution of the British empire. In fact, however, the process of decolonisation which had begun before 1939 with the Statute of Westminster (1931), and perhaps even earlier with the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, gathered momentum after 1945. The granting of independence to India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Burma in the late 1940s was accompanied by withdrawal from Palestine in 1948 and in 1954 from the Suez Canal Zone. An attempt to restore British influence in the Middle East with the Suez expedition of 1956 broke down in the face of American opposition.

During the 1960s, withdrawal from empire continued apace under Harold Macmillan and his colonial secretary Iain MacLeod. It was accompanied by a policy of drawing closer to the European Economic Community. Macmillan made the first application to enter Europe in 1962 but it was not until 1973 that Britain, together with the Republic of Ireland, was finally admitted to membership. Looked at in retrospect, this apparently inexorable process of moving from overseas empire to European community would seem to be the most significant trend of post-war Britain.

Within Britain the long-term impact of commitment to Europe was to intensify the drift to the south-east. The economic decline of the north and west which had been halted during the Second World War was resumed. As they had been during the 1920s and 1930s, rates of unemployment were much higher in 'Outer Britain'. The core prospered, the periphery languished. A. J. P. Taylor concluded his study *England 1914–45* with the reflection 'Few even sang "England Arise". England had risen all the same.' His point was wrongheaded in relation to England, but may be allowed to stand in relation to the south-east.

Alongside the currents of change there were elements of continuity. The key to Welsh attitudes as so often before lay in the division between the largely rural north (in which the industrial area of Flintshire was an exception) and the largely industrial south. The attempt of Plaid Cymru

to create a unified nationalist movement ran into great difficulties in the face of this divide. It was not until 1966 in a by-election at Carmarthen that Plaid Cymru won its first parliamentary seat, only to lose it in the general election of 1970. The cruellest blow which Welsh nationalism received was in the referendum of 1979 when there was an overwhelming vote against devolution (46.5 per cent against, 11.8 per cent for).

The most powerful force in Wales, the Labour party, set its face against nationalism. Aneurin Bevan (1897–1960) throughout his political career spoke out against any concession to Welsh nationalist sentiment. It was only with the greatest reluctance that he accepted a proposal to establish a Secretary of State for Wales on the Scottish model, backed by the more nationally minded James Griffiths. In the 1979 election Plaid Cymru came a poor third with two seats compared to eleven for the Conservative party and twenty-two for Labour.

There was indeed no national issue which was capable of uniting north and south Wales. In 1960, debates on the question of Sunday opening of public houses aroused old antagonisms. The northern counties in which Welsh-speaking nonconformity was strong voted heavily against the sale of drink on Sundays. The southern counties voted in favour. Though the voting was largely symbolic since alcoholic refreshment was available throughout Wales in innumerable small social clubs, the results did point to the continued influence of Sabbatarian attitudes in the north which went back to the heyday of Gladstonian Liberalism and the 1881 Sunday Closing Act.

In Scotland, Scottish nationalism also remained surprisingly weak. Discontent with the dominance of south-eastern England took the form of an increased vote for Labour. Scottish nationalism hit the newspaper headlines but the realities of power remained with Labour. The contrast between east and west Scotland remained important though the balance shifted increasingly towards the west in the sense that Labour, the party of the industrial west, continued to make headway there. In the 1959 election the east returned twelve Conservatives to thirteen Labour. On Clydeside, Labour won nineteen seats, the Conservatives eight, a better result for the Conservatives than it was to be seven years later. In the 1966 election, which marked a high point for Labour, the east stretching from Aberdeen to Edinburgh still returned ten Conservative seats to Labour's fourteen. In the industrial west, however, it was a different story. On Clydeside, Labour won twenty-four seats, Conservatives three.

There were some signs in the 1960s that this system of 'informal Home Rule' was beginning to break down. In November 1967, with a Labour government in power, Hamilton, the second safest Labour seat in Scotland, was won by an SNP candidate, Mrs Winifred Ewing. From late

1970, the discovery of a series of important oil fields off the east coast of Scotland provided an issue on which the SNP capitalised. The demand that 'Scottish Oil' should be used for the benefit of the Scottish people gave new life to Scottish nationalism. In the first general election of 1974, the SNP gained seven seats with 22 per cent of the Scottish vote. In the second general election of that year they gained eleven seats with 30 per cent of the vote. Devolution became an issue which the Labour government could not ignore and in 1979, in Wales as well as Scotland, it was put to a referendum. In Wales, to the consternation of Plaid Cymru, devolution was decisively rejected with less than 12 per cent of the votes cast. In Scotland it attracted 52 per cent of the votes cast but this amounted to only 33 per cent of the total electorate, short of the 40 per cent which the government had laid down as an essential prerequisite. In the 1979 election, there was a decisive swing against the SNP, which was left with only two seats. Labour, though losing the general election in the United Kingdom as a whole, retained its position as the main party of protest in Scotland.

Despite the importance of class and of nationalism, religious issues still remained very much alive in some areas of Scottish life. In this respect the central Lowlands and especially the Clydeside area resembled Northern Ireland. As J. G. Kellas stated in his study *Modern Scotland* (1968), it is still possible to see graffiti urging passers-by to 'F—k the Pope' (an anti-Irish sentiment rather than an anti-papal one). Ulster Unionists found a more sympathetic audience on Clydeside than they found elsewhere in the British Isles.

In Ireland, as in Wales and Scotland, long-standing historical patterns continued to reveal themselves. The Republic of Ireland was an independent state. Culturally, politically and economically, however, its affairs remained inextricably intertwined with those of the United Kingdom. The relationship of Ireland and Britain was full of paradoxes. Many of the leading figures in 'English' literature during the twentieth century, Yeats, Joyce, Synge, O Casey, Heaney, were Irishmen. In certain sports, such as golf and rugby, the difference between the Republic and Northern Ireland was virtually ignored and 'Ireland', a non-existent political entity, fielded a united team. In horse-racing also there were the closest of ties between English and Irish communities. Irish actors such as Cyril Cusack and T. P. MacKenna were familiar figures on the London stage.

Profound tensions remained, however, in the relationship between the Republic and the United Kingdom. Each had different interpretations of the recent past. The Sinn Fein rebellion of 1916 was heroic in nationalist eyes, but an act of treachery to Unionists. Irish neutrality in the Second World War continued to be a source of resentment in Britain long after

the war ended. In Ireland, Churchill's criticism of De Valera in 1945 was looked upon as a piece of spite against a small nation by a victor lacking in magnanimity. During the northern crisis of 1969 and the years following, relations between Britain and the Irish Republic continued to reflect deep-seated historical emotions.

Irish emigration to England had been low during the depressed 1930s and during the war years. After the war, however, Irish men and women once more made their way to England in search of a job. During the 1950s an 'Irish presence' in the south-east became noticeable after the emigration of 375,000 Irish men and women to the United Kingdom. These were figures higher than in any period since the 1880s and were a consequence of the depressed state of the Irish economy.

In Ireland itself partition was in some respects more notional than real. Trinity College, Dublin continued to draw many of its students from the 'north' (a fact no longer true today). The archbishopric of Armagh, north of the border, was the primatial see for both the Catholic Church and for the Church of Ireland. During the 1960s, indeed, it seemed as though good relations between Stormont and Dublin were about to make the border irrelevant. In 1965, Sean Lemans, the Irish Taoiseach, and Terence O Neill, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, met.

Cultural divisions within Northern Ireland, however, proved to be less amenable to resolution. The Protestant community in Northern Ireland had been badly hit by the collapse of the linen industry in the face of competition from man-made fibres and by the decline of the Belfast shipbuilding industry. In contrast, among northern Catholics, there was a sense of rising expectations, fuelled in part by the long-term effects of the 1944 Education Act which made higher education more accessible to poorer sections of the population. Terence O Neill's promises of reform aroused further hopes. In 1967 members of the newly articulate Catholic middle class protested against discrimination and founded a Civil Rights Association on the model of similar movements in the United States. However, the largely unanticipated consequence of Terence O Neill's reform proposals was a fierce Protestant backlash which led to violence in 1969. A prolonged crisis began which was partially resolved in 1972 when the British government took over direct responsibility for Northern Ireland. A fifty-year period of 'Home Rule' had come to an end.

The 'Irish Question' once more entered British politics, and the 'British Question' re-entered Irish politics. Violence in Northern Ireland had the consequence of bringing the Republic of Ireland into closer contact with the United Kingdom. After a long period of mutual isolation the governments of the two states were once more involved with each other. In 1973 both countries became members of the EEC.

Figure 36. *Bobby Sands mural*
Robert (Bobby) Sands died in 1981 in the Maze prison after sixty-five
days on hunger strike. He was a leader of a movement which demanded
political status for the IRA prisoners. After his death he was seen as a
martyr and since then his image has appeared on many murals within
nationalist areas. Murals with an anti-IRA, pro-Ulster Volunteer mes-
sage are a feature in many Unionist areas.

The Northern Ireland crisis of 1969 and the years following illustrate
once again the difficulty of treating the different national units of the
British Isles in isolation. The influence of history, since the plantation
of Ulster in the early seventeenth century and the battle of the Boyne in
1690, was too powerful to be ignored. Historians of Britain since 1922
have dealt with the problem of the 'Irish dimension' by ignoring it. To
resort to this solution, however, leads inevitably to oversimplification. The
cultural influence of Ireland is still strong in Glasgow and Liverpool and
in the new Irish communities of London and Birmingham. The politics of
Northern Ireland itself cannot be understood in a specifically six-county
context. The IRA itself adopts an interpretation of Irish history which
takes it back at least to Wolfe Tone and the rebellion of 1798 and its
allied party Sinn Fein began to take an active role in politics south of the
border. There is, in addition, the British Isles dimension of the former
dominions, particularly in Australia, where there is a strong Irish presence
in the Labour party.

Twentieth-century British history (especially in the south-east) has been complicated by an additional 'ethnic' factor. As has been indicated earlier, ethnic diversity had been a characteristic of the newly industrialised areas of the British Isles during the nineteenth century, with the Irish and, to a lesser extent the Jews, making up the bulk of the new immigrants. In Scotland, Lithuanians and Italians added to the mix. Between the wars, however, emigration rather than immigration was a more typical phenomenon. Between 1921 and 1930, for example, 261,000 British emigrants arrived in Australia, four-fifths of them on government-assisted passages. After the war, the situation changed. There was now a huge demand for unskilled labour in Britain and in western Europe generally. London Transport set up a recruiting office for bus drivers in Barbados. Woollen mills in Yorkshire dispatched representatives to the Punjab to recruit labour for night shift work and lower-paid jobs. In Bradford by 1971 there were 30,000 Pakistanis out of a total working population of 300,000.

The earliest post-war immigrants were from the West Indies, many of them ex-servicemen from Jamaica, who arrived on the *Empire Windrush* in 1948. West Indian immigration on a large scale did not begin, however, until 1953, after restrictions were imposed on entry into the United States by the MacCarran Act of 1952. A second phase began in the early 1950s after the granting of independence to Britain's East African colonies. Indians had settled there in large numbers with the encouragement of the British government. In 1901 the British Special Commissioner in Uganda declared that 'East Africa is, and should be, from every point of view, the America of the Hindu.' Fifty years later the wheel had come full circle. The newly independent colonies began to implement policies of 'Africanisation', which placed the Indians under pressure. It was this 'push' factor which led to a mass exodus of Indians from East Africa to the United Kingdom from 1967 onwards.

After the 1971 census it was estimated that over one and a half million immigrants of 'New Commonwealth' ethnic origins were resident within the United Kingdom. Of these, over half were from India and Pakistan or were East African Asians. Between a quarter and a third were from the West Indies. These bald statistics, however, do not convey any sense of the wide variety of internal cultural differences, particularly among Indians and West Indians.

Immigrants from the New Commonwealth made up only a small proportion (between 2 and 3 per cent) of the total population of the United Kingdom. They tended to congregate in specific areas, however, drawn there partly by the prospect of employment and partly by cheap housing. In 1971, statistics for certain London boroughs, especially Brent,

Haringey, Hackney, Islington and Lambeth, indicated that new immigrants accounted for between 20 and 30 per cent of the entry into local schools. The largest concentration of Commonwealth immigrants was in the south-east, especially in Greater London. Other towns such as Derby, Huddersfield, Bradford and Wolverhampton attracted large numbers of immigrants. Other areas, Scotland and most of northern England, were largely untouched.

Mention should also be made of 'New Irish' immigration, which was much higher than that of any single group of New Commonwealth immigrants. In 1969 it was estimated that there were c. 750,000 immigrants from the Irish Republic, as well as many thousands from Northern Ireland. The New Irish did not settle in the depressed areas of Liverpool and Glasgow where there were old-established Irish populations but in London (especially Kilburn), Bristol and Birmingham.

Many of these newcomers, the Irish excepted, were highly visible because of their colour and, in the case of such groups as the Sikhs, because of their costume. It was thus not surprising that legislation was passed to restrict entry in 1962 and again after the arrival of other Indians from East Africa in 1968. But attempts made to whip up 'nativist' hysteria against the immigrants on lines which recalled anti-Irish and anti-Jewish propaganda in the nineteenth century fell largely on deaf ears. In April 1968, Enoch Powell, perhaps in an attempt to challenge Edward Heath's leadership of the Conservative party, made a speech which has been compared to Randolph Churchill's playing of the 'Orange Card' in 1886. Powell, a former Professor of Classics, declared that 'Those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad. We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation, to be permitting the annual flow of some 50,000 dependants . . . It is like watching a nation busily engaging in heaping up its own funeral pyre.' He spoke in highly emotional terms of a formerly 'quiet street' which had become 'a place of noise and confusion' and where 'a single white old lady, had been shouted at by her coloured neighbours' and had 'excreta pushed through her letter box'. Ironically, after playing the 'Orange Card', Powell found himself consigned to the relative obscurity of an Ulster constituency. Several decades later, during the election campaign of 2005, Michael Howard, then leader of the Conservative party, advocated measures to control immigration in the hope of political gain. In the aftermath of the Tube bombings of 7 July 2005 new concerns arose, with identity cards, police powers and racial discrimination to the fore.

As with Britain's entry into the EEC, it remains to be seen what the long-term impact of the New Commonwealth immigration upon British society will be. Clearly, important distinctions must be drawn between

the different immigrant groups. One West Indian stated that 'We are not immigrants in the true technical sense: after all we are members of the Realm. We are British.' A prominent Trinidadian observed, 'Like every West Indian, I am part Englishman. I mean this, of course, in the sense that, having acquired the English language, the traditions and institutions of this country, it is natural for me to want to be here. The West Indian is essentially what British culture and influences have made him.'

We may conclude this brief survey of post-war trends by stressing once again the continuing dominance of the south-east. In the field of higher education, many of the new universities founded in the 1960s in Sussex, East Anglia, Essex, Kent, Surrey and elsewhere, were situated in the southern and eastern counties in an arc with Greater London as its centre. The public schools, also heavily concentrated in the south and east, were attacked during the first Labour government but successfully beat off the challenge. The 'Media' in broadcasting, publishing and the press remained based upon London. The 'City' continued to grow in importance. It was thus not surprising that the finest sight in the north, as in Scotland and Wales, continued to be the High Road to the south. Even Ireland was not immune to the cultural influence of London. One of the most striking sights of the Dublin area during the 1960s was the forest of high-rising TV aerials, constructed to receive British television programmes from across the Irish Sea. 'Sinn Fein' had broken down with a vengeance in the newly urbanised Ireland. In the early years of the twenty-first century, however, the success of the Celtic Tiger and the prominence of the Irish Republic in Europe led to 'the Irish model' being viewed in nationalist circles as appropriate for Wales and Scotland.

South Wales drew closer to south-eastern England during the post-war period, as new high-speed trains and motorways made communication easier. North Wales became a culture under pressure, partly as a consequence of unemployment, partly owing to the influence of tourism.

In western Scotland, Clydeside was particularly hard hit by unemployment in shipbuilding and mining. The shipbuilding industry in particular found it difficult to compete with competition from Japan, South Korea and Germany. Eastern Scotland, after the discovery of North Sea oil, enjoyed something of a 'boom' period. Of all the peripheral areas of the United Kingdom, Scotland may well have retained its autonomy more successfully than any other.

However, the drift to southern England continues, with a seventy-mile area around London linked to the metropolis by high-speed trains for the benefit of daily commuters. The balance between 'core' and 'periphery' has shifted unmistakeably in favour of the core.

Figure 37. *The Black Watch*
'The Black Watch' is a Scottish regiment in the British Army originally formed in the early eighteenth century and taking its name from the dark-coloured tartan of its uniform. The retention of such units within a modernising post-imperial British Army became a sensitive political issue in the late twentieth century and was seized upon by the Scottish National Party (SNP). The tartan as a symbol of Scottish identity retains considerable though not universal popularity.

In 1985, a tutor at a Cambridge college told me that it was the custom of the college to steer his students away from Scottish, Irish or Welsh history should they show unhealthy signs of interest in such peripheral topics. For him, British history was English history. The problem about this, as has been suggested repeatedly throughout this study, is that the history of 'England' has overlapped repeatedly with that of other cultures

within the British Isles (a term which should include the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands, Shetland and Orkney, as well as the larger islands of Britain and Ireland). It would, no doubt, have simplified the historian's task had England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales been distinctive, stable historical units over long periods of time. In fact, however, the history of the British Isles, for at least a thousand years, resembles that of the Italian peninsula, the Iberian peninsula or the Swiss Confederation more than is generally supposed. In modern times English culture has achieved a general dominance much as German culture did within the dominions of the Habsburgs. The advance of the English language has squeezed the Celtic languages to the periphery of the British Isles.

The fact remains, however, that during the past two millennia, 'England', 'Ireland', 'Scotland' and 'Wales' have not lived in mutual isolation. Since the Viking invasions, and even earlier, the cultures of the British Isles have reacted to each other. In 1973 a new historical page was turned when the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic entered the Common Market. Clearly this was a new beginning, the implications of which are being worked out. Clearly also, Britain and Ireland are exposed to powerful cultural influences from across the Atlantic. When all this is said, however, the influence of history itself cannot be left out of account. The conflict between Celtic and Germanic cultures, the Norman Conquests, the impact of Reformation and Counter-Reformation, the effect of migration within the British Isles, the consequences of imperial expansion – all these have left a lasting mark upon cultural and political relationships within these islands.

The story did not end in 1973 with British and Irish entry into the Common Market, nor can it be confined merely to the relationship between Britain and Ireland. The impact of new ethnic groups began to be felt in 1989 after the publication of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, which was publicly burned in Bradford by Islamic fundamentalists. The possible entry into Britain of Hongkong Chinese after the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997 also showed signs of becoming an important political issue in 1990. The debate about what constituted 'British identity' continued in 1990 against the background of governmental involvement in a national history curriculum. Scottish and Welsh nationalism simmered. The Northern Ireland issue, which involved Dublin as well as London, Belfast and Washington, DC, refused to go away. Class issues were still dominant in British politics but ethnicity remained as a factor of great political significance for the future.

13   Post-Imperial Britain: Post-Nationalist Ireland

At the end of the twentieth century, Britain retained many external features of a tradition-bound society – an hereditary monarchy, an hereditary peerage, and a system of public honours which included the medieval title of knighthood. In England there was also an established church of which the monarch was the supreme governor. The annual opening of parliament provided a ritual setting in which these institutions found a place. In the flourishing modern tourist industry such traditional features are emphasised. In fact, however, rituals conceal the extent to which radical changes have taken place in the political, social and economic configuration of the United Kingdom as a whole as well as in the Republic of Ireland. In 1999 the Anglo-Scottish Act of Union dating from 1707 was substantially modified with the establishment or (re-establishment as many saw it) of a Scottish parliament elected by proportional representation and possessing considerable financial and political powers. In Wales also, in 1999, a Welsh Assembly was opened in Cardiff, giving expression to Welsh distinctiveness. Scotland and Wales had indeed gained 'Home Rule.' Within Ireland, the six-county unit of Northern Ireland created in 1920, had long possessed its own devolved parliament. In 1972, however, soon after 'Bloody Sunday' when thirteen civilians were shot by British paratroopers, the Westminster government imposed Direct Rule. On Good Friday in 1998 after almost twenty years of communal violence a provisional form of self-government based on power sharing was set up, although this also ran into difficulties and at time of writing still faces an uncertain future. The problems of Northern Ireland brought the Republic of Ireland into much closer contact with the British government than had been the case for many years and by 2000 a joint institutional framework had been created. In England itself Greater London was now represented by an elected mayor whose political influence in the capital could not be ignored by the governments of the day.

Large-scale economic shifts ran parallel to political change. In Northern England, South Wales, the south of Scotland, and Northern Ireland, industrialisation went into reverse. Industries which had been so recently

a defining feature of northern Britain proved unable to survive the challenge of foreign competition or of modernisation. Shipbuilding, once so important in Glasgow, Birkenhead, Belfast and the north-east, continued to decline despite government support. The steel industry in south Wales, Scotland and Yorkshire suffered a similar fate. Coal mining, which had once been dominant in south Wales, northern England and Scotland, was reduced to a few pits. Indeed by the year 2000 the only remaining deep-shaft mine in south Wales survived as a tourist attraction. In the midlands the only independent British car manufacturer Rover was forced into liquidation in 2005. In Sheffield and in the pottery towns of Staffordshire it was the same story. As a result the numbers and power of the industrial trade unions also declined.

By contrast London and the south-east together with the M4 corridor enjoyed remarkable prosperity, as a consequence of their success in attracting modern electronic and pharmaceutical industries as well as in promoting tourism. The success of the City of London as a financial centre was also important in making possible the regeneration of the former docklands area of Canary Wharf. Another unexpected development took place in the Republic of Ireland, whose economy was transformed in response to overseas investment coupled with development grants from the European Community. This startling economic success carried with it implications as a model for Wales and Scotland, as well as Northern Ireland, in providing the example of a small 'Celtic' country combining economic success with political independence.

Within the United Kingdom there were also significant changes in its ethnic makeup. 'The UK' had, of course, long been a multi-ethnic society, although this had been largely concealed by the widespread use of the inclusive term 'British'. In Scotland, South Wales, Northern Ireland, Liverpool, and not least London, the 'four nations' co-existed sometimes in less than harmonious propinquity. But the concept of ethnicity was still an unfamiliar one as late as the 1970s. During the post-war years after 1945, however, large-scale emigration from the Caribbean, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and parts of Africa added a new dimension to the ethnic mix. There was also heavy migration from Ireland during the 1960s into London (especially Kilburn) and Birmingham.

New religious identities were a key aspect of ethnicity. Islam and Hinduism are now a conspicuous presence in many urban areas of Britain. In the London borough of Tower Hamlets, one third of the population is Muslim. During the election of 2005, the ethnic vote was considered to be a significant factor in such areas as Birmingham and Leicester. In terms of the total population of the United Kingdom, the numbers of post-war immigrants are relatively small. However, the impact of

Figure 38. *Muslim community life in Britain*
The arrival of Muslim and Hindu immigrants from India and Pakistan
during the post-war period may be compared with that of Jews and
Irish during the nineteenth century. In all these cases, religion became
the basis of social identity, separating ethnic minority from national
majority. At first British government policy seemed to favour 'multi-
culturalism' but anxieties after 11 September 2003 in the United States
and the suicide bombings in London (7 July 2005) brought assimilation
on to the political agenda. This image of a mosque is a symbol of the
presence of Islam in post-war Britain. It has been estimated that by 2040
there will be twice as many Muslims at prayer in mosques on Friday as
Christians worshipping in church on Sunday. Hindus and Sikhs rival
Muslims in numbers.

immigration raised questions about the nature of British identity. Immigration became a key issue in the election campaign of 2005 when the Conservative leader Michael Howard, himself the son of Romanian immigrants, called for a limit to immigration.

As we have seen, the United Kingdom underwent substantial change from 1945 when the retreat from Empire gradually forced a re-evaluation of Britain's place in the world. Britain's decision to enter the European Common Market in 1973 brought about an inevitable weakening of ties with Australia, New Zealand and Canada. World competition began to threaten hitherto secure industries such as shipbuilding and car manufacture.

Government subsidies were required to rescue traditional industries from collapse. By the 1970s wage control had become a key issue for the Labour government as a means of protecting jobs, but their attempt to bring about a measure of industrial peace failed. The way was open for more radical measures.

During the post-war decades there had been general agreement between the two main political parties about the need to maintain the Welfare State. The term 'Butskellism' was shorthand for this policy, implying as it did common ground between the Conservative politician R.A. Butler and the Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell. During the late 1960s and the 1970s, however, inflation and industrial unrest stretched political consensus to breaking point. These years had also seen the outbreak of serious unrest in Northern Ireland. The climax came in 1979 with the so-called 'Winter of Discontent' when a combination of inflation and strikes led to a general election which was won by the Conservative party under a new leader Margaret Thatcher. The result was to bring a government to power which reversed the Butskellite consensus and set in train radical social and economic changes.

The radicalism of the Thatcher government began to appear during her first administration (1979–83) when financial decisions were taken which led to the cutting of state expenditure and to a massive rise in unemployment. Unpopularity inevitably followed, but successful prosecution of the Falklands War in 1982 led to a surge of nationalist fervour from which the government benefited and in 1983 Mrs Thatcher was re-elected. Her second ministry proved to be far more radical than the first. It was marked in particular by her decision to confront the challenge of the National Union of Mineworkers, whose opposition to the closing of uneconomic pits was seen as a central political issue. Successive governments had yielded to the miners, and even Mrs Thatcher in her first ministry had decided to avoid full confrontation. By 1984, however, she was prepared to do battle with the miners' leader Arthur Scargill in

a conflict which lasted for almost a year and which led to victory for the government.

The implementation of the Thatcherite programme had unpleasant implications for northern England, the Midlands, south Wales and the industrial areas of Scotland. The Butskellite consensus had made industrial and social peace a major objective and the general effect of such policies had been to subsidise areas dominated by traditional 'smokestack' industries in which established trade union practices impeded rises in productivity. A notorious example was the newspaper printing industry where unions opposed all attempts to modernise and persisted in the practice of over-manning. In the age of the computer, however, their resistance proved futile and their bluff was called by Rupert Murdoch in 1985. By 1990 the only nationalised industry to survive was British Rail and even this was soon to be privatised under John Major, Mrs Thatcher's successor.

One of the consequences of the Thatcherite revolution was to re-emphasise the dominance of London and the south-east in the United Kingdom, as the heartland of the Conservative party. In contrast, the recent leadership of the Labour party was drawn from northern England (Harold Wilson), Wales (James Callaghan) and Scotland (John Smith). The so-called 'dream ticket' of Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley in the election of 1992 brought together a Welshman and a Yorkshireman. The trade unions also were institutions which represented the interests of northern England, Wales and Scotland. The impact of successive Thatcherite governments was thus to reduce the political and economic influence of "the North" (together with Scotland and Wales) in the interests of what came to be known as "Middle England" (in effect the south-east).[1] There was also a marked class element in Mrs Thatcher's victories. Indeed she saw herself as a representative of the industrious middle class, opposed to a largely idle upper-middle class as she saw it, and a self-centred working class, symbolised for her by the unions.

Another feature of Thatcherism during the 1980s was a powerful current of nationalism reinforced both by the Falklands conflict and by her struggle with the European Community over the level of British contributions to its budget. In Northern Ireland she was strongly pro-Unionist. Mrs Thatcher was also suspicious of the effects of overseas immigration, an outlook shared by one of her ministers Norman Tebbitt, who

[1] By 1986 the rate of unemployment in Scotland was 11.1 per cent, over double the figure of 5.7 per cent in 1979. In Wales it rose from 5.5 per cent in 1979 to 13.2 per cent in 1986. In the United Kingdom as a whole there were over 3 million unemployed in 1986 (11.8 per cent of the workforce); see E. Powell, *Patriots*, p. 586.

questioned the loyalty of the newcomers to such national symbols as the England cricket team.

Thatcherite nationalism paid apparent political dividends for the Conservative party. Victory in the Falklands in 1982 was accompanied by success in her long-drawn-out campaign to reduce Britain's financial contribution to the European budget. Later in the 1980s she was sounding a similar nationalist note when in Bruges in September 1988 she declared:

We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the State in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level with a European superstate exercising a new dominance from Brussels. (J. Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, vol. II, *The Iron Lady* (London, 2003), p. 605)

This time, however, her nationalism rebounded on her by encouraging Eurosceptics within the party and causing a serious rift between pro- and anti-Europe groups. Her successor John Major inherited a party which was soon to be out of control. Mrs Thatcher's Bruges speech had the unintended consequence of dividing the Conservative party and ultimately, by 1997, making possible victory for Labour within the Conservative heartland of the south-east.

Mrs Thatcher's policies in other parts of the United Kingdom also had unintended consequences, particularly in Scotland and in Northern Ireland. So far as Scotland was concerned, she saw herself as a staunch defender of the Union, a view which seemed to receive support in the 1979 election, when the Scottish National party lost nine of its eleven seats. But Mrs Thatcher's economic policies had disastrous repercussions in Scotland, the heavy industries of the west of Scotland and the clothing industries of the Borders being particularly hard hit. Mining and shipbuilding collapsed and the steel industry survived only with difficulty until finally in 1993 the giant Ravenscraig plant itself closed. During the 1980s Scottish manufacturing lost about one fifth of jobs (T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700–2000* (London, 1999), p. 598), although there was some compensation to be found in the oil industry of the north-east and in electronics.

Mrs Thatcher herself tended to see the United Kingdom as a unitary state and this led her to underestimate the extent of Scottish resentment nationwide. One revealing incident took place in May 1988 when she addressed the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in the so-called 'sermon on the Mound' (the Mound being a familiar Edinburgh landmark). The tone of her speech in which she placed the economic virtues of thrift and hard work as central to the Christian message aroused fierce criticism among those who knew of the effects of Thatcherite policies in Scotland. The election results of 1987 had already made it clear
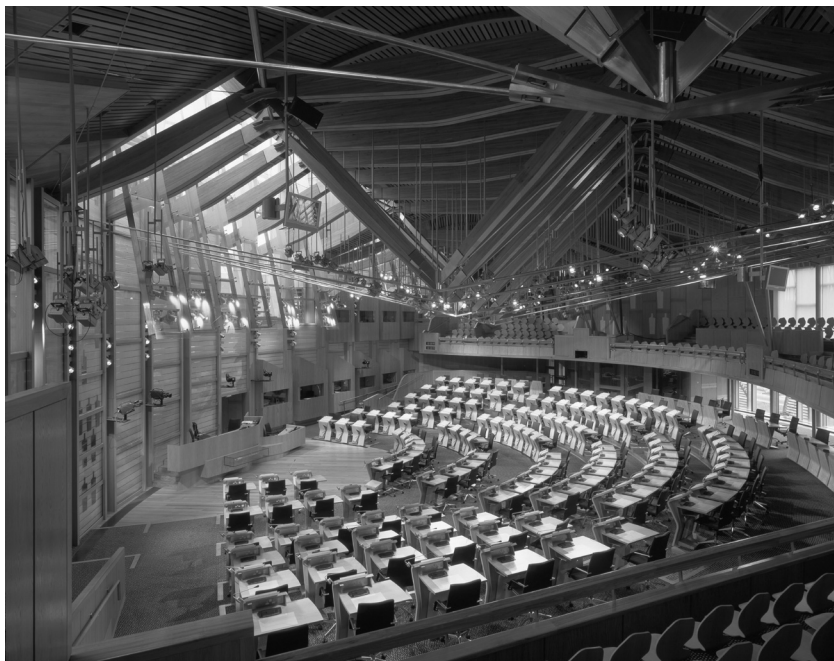
Figure 39. *The new Parliament building in Scotland*
In 1999, after a referendum in favour, a Scottish parliament met for the first time since 1707. The long-term effects of Scottish independence on the UK have yet to appear but in the short term it has led to a decline in support for the Scottish National party. In England there may well be growing resentment at Scottish MPs being able to vote on English matters.

that her brand of Conservatism was unpopular. Labour was now much the largest party with fifty of the seventy-two Scottish seats, whereas the Conservatives had lost eleven of their twenty-one seats (Devine, *The Scottish Nation* (1999), p. 605).

The effect of Mrs Thatcher's 'sermon on the Mound' was intensified when a year later, in 1989, her government decided to introduce the unpopular 'Poll Tax' into Scotland, a year ahead of England and Wales. It was a decision which took no account of Scottish sensitivities and predictably led to civil disobedience on a wide scale. As Professor Devine points out, the leaders of the three largest Scottish Churches condemned the tax as 'undemocratic, unjust, socially divisive and destructive of community and family life' (Devine, *The Scottish Nation* (1999), p. 604). Not surprisingly the Scottish nationalism which Mrs Thatcher thought she

had defeated in 1979 reappeared more effectively than ever before. In 1988 'A Claim of Right for Scotland' was published calling for a national convention to be summoned. The SNP refused to participate but the Labour party, in a new departure for it, agreed to do so, thus providing a decisive measure of political support for devolution. It was not until July 1999, however, after an overwhelming Labour victory in the election of 1997, that Home Rule became a reality, by which time the Conservative party had ceased to hold any parliamentary seats in Scotland. In 2005 it regained one seat out of the fifty-nine available. The dominant party remained Labour but the Liberal Democrats were now second. The Scottish National Party which had pressed for independence rather than devolution, came a poor third with only six seats. Within the Scottish parliament itself, power was shared between Labour and the Liberal Democrats. Mrs Thatcher's policies in Scotland had thus brought about the almost total eclipse of her party.

Mrs Thatcher's long period in office undoubtedly made the British economy more competitive. The price which she paid, however, was the alienation of Scotland, Wales and the north (including much of the midlands) from the Conservative party. Her brand of nationalism rested upon success in the south-east. Not surprisingly her chosen heir as Prime Minister was John Major, a Londoner to the core, a devotee of cricket, and a self-made man, who in many ways symbolised the appeal of Thatcherism in the south-east and who in 1992, to general surprise, won the general election with a narrow majority. Soon, however, Major's badly judged entry into the European monetary system led to the financial debacle known as 'Black Wednesday' and to a further decline in the prestige of the Conservative party.

A similar reversal of what Mrs Thatcher had intended took place in Northern Ireland. As discussed earlier, the compromise reached between the British government and Irish nationalists in 1921 left unfinished business in the shape of partition. 'Ireland' was both outside the United Kingdom and within it. The Republic of Ireland was an independent state. Northern Ireland was an autonomous six-county unit within the United Kingdom but what looked like a tidy division of territory on the map was complicated by the fact that the inhabitants were divided on religious grounds. In the south, 'ethnic cleansing' during the early 1920s had created a largely Catholic state. In the north, however, partition led to a situation in which a two-thirds Protestant majority controlled a one-third Catholic minority. By the 1960s this was a situation which had come to appear intolerable to many Catholics. Part of the reason for Catholic unrest lay in expectations raised by the creation of a warmer relationship between the governments of north and south. The example of the

American civil rights movement was also important. Hence in the mid-1960s there were growing hopes of reform particularly among the Catholic middle class. At the same time, however, fears grew among the Protestant population at the prospect of radical change. It was a situation which soon became violent and confused, leading eventually to a policy of massive internment without trial (1971) and to an ill-judged attempt to disperse a crowd by armed force on Bloody Sunday (1972) when thirteen civilians were shot by British paratroopers. By 1974 the British Prime Minister Edward Heath had performed a U turn with an attempt (at Sunningdale) to set up a power-sharing administration on which Protestant and Catholic politicians would serve. Here again, as in 1969, liberal intentions were thwarted by Protestant 'die-hards' who viewed any concessions as tantamount to surrender. The later 1970s were marked by deadlock. In his memoir *Shooting History* (London, 2004) Jon Snow, the British journalist, described his own reaction on a visit to Northern Ireland.

I had absolutely no prior sense of the scale of the deprivation and discrimination suffered by the Catholic population. But the poverty proved undiscriminating: the squalor and sense of hopelessness on the catholic Falls Road were matched on the working class Protestant streets around the Shankill Road . . . I could not believe that my own country had sustained and encouraged such a grossly unjust state of affairs.

Broadly speaking this was the situation that Mrs Thatcher inherited in 1979. It seems clear that she saw the military defeat of the Provisional IRA as her main priority, especially after the assassination in 1979 of Airey Neave, her intended candidate as secretary of Northern Ireland. It was thus unsurprising that she opposed any compromise over the status of IRA prisoners in connection with the so-called 'dirty protest' which had become a trial of wills between the British government and IRA prisoners from 1979 onwards over the wearing of prison uniform. In 1981 a number of IRA prisoners went on hunger strike, the most prominent being Bobby Sands who was elected MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone in April 1981, just before he died. Despite the urging of John Hume, leader of the largely Catholic Social and Democratic Party, that she should avoid creating 'martyrs', Mrs Thatcher refused to seek a compromise. But her victory proved to be a pyrrhic one. The IRA did not disappear and in fact the publicity it received over the 'martyrdom' of Bobby Sands led to a surge of sympathy among many Irish-Americans. The bombing of the Grand Hotel in Brighton in 1984 during the Conservative party conference was perhaps the most dramatic indication that the problem of Northern Ireland was not likely to wither away.

Mrs Thatcher treated the problems of Northern Ireland as the exclusive concern of the United Kingdom. In fact, however, by 1981 the 'Dirty Protest' had widened into a question which deeply involved both the Irish Republic and Irish-Americans in the United States. The 'Irish Problem', familiar since the passing of the Act of Union in 1801, had returned in a new guise. Since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921, successive British governments had largely been able to ignore the concerns of the Irish Free State (since 1949 the Republic of Ireland). In its turn 'Ireland' under De Valera adopted a policy of economic self-sufficiency and later, during the war, of neutrality. Surprisingly De Valera was unsympathetic towards the IRA, many of whose members he interned during the Second World War, and when IRA activity revived in the south during the 1950s De Valera's reaction was to intern over a hundred of its members. The problems of Northern Ireland thus had a low priority within the new state which had largely accepted partition as the price of its own independence. The Catholic episcopate in the south was also conscious that it enjoyed such immense influence because the Irish state, though nominally secular, was to a large extent a Catholic state.

De Valera resigned as Taoiseach (i.e. chief minister) in June 1959 to be replaced by Sean Lemass, whose period of office, though short, inaugurated a period of radical change. Indeed the 1960s proved to be as much of a turning point in the Irish Republic as they did in the United Kingdom. Sean Lemass moved away from the protectionism which had hitherto been accepted as the essential underpinning of the Irish state. His change of course in economic matters also coincided fortuitously with John XXIII's pontificate, and almost imperceptibly the dominance of the Catholic Church came under challenge in such matters as censorship, contraception, divorce and even abortion. In 1973, at the same moment as Britain, the Irish Republic became a member of the European Common Market, a decision which brought with it massive financial aid, and a measure of political influence within Europe. The Republic embraced its new European identity far more enthusiastically than did Britain and had no problems in converting to the euro. By the end of the century there was a clear contrast between Northern Ireland, still seeking a solution for its own problems in the context of the UK, and 'the Celtic Tiger', as the newly prosperous Republic was nicknamed.

An equally significant change occurred in Irish-American relations. During the war years De Valera's determined neutrality created tensions with the United States, which at one moment considered the option of invasion. In contrast, Britain and the United States forged a 'special relationship', which was strengthened during the Cold War by the establishment of American bases. During this period, 'Ireland' seemed a poor

relation. Within the United States itself, however, the Irish-American Catholic community acquired a new confidence based upon growing economic power and political influence. In 1960 John F. Kennedy became the first Catholic President. But this was not an isolated phenomenon. Irishmen such as Anthony O Reilly became influential in corporate America. In the House of Representatives 'Tip' O Neill was Speaker. The Irish Catholic vote was also a key consideration in northern industrial cities such as Boston and Chicago. The Irish lobby was not yet as influential as the Jewish lobby; it nevertheless was a new factor in post-war America, to which Irish governments could now turn for support. Britain and Israel already enjoyed a special relationship with the United States but it became clear in the 1980s that the Irish Republic also enjoyed one. Irish-American backing in fact encouraged successive governments of the Irish Republic to demonstrate that Britain could not ignore its views on the status of the Catholic minority in the north.

Irish America was also a significant factor in the rise of Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland. Middle-class opinion lent support to the moderate Social and Democratic party. At a popular level, however, and among recent Irish immigrants into the United States, Sinn Fein had more appeal and when its leader Gerry Adams was admitted into the United States in 1995 he attracted large audiences. Sinn Fein propaganda laid great stress upon the injustice of British policy in Ireland over the centuries, in particular the Great Famine of the 1840s which, in the tradition of the Irish nationalist John Mitchel, was seen as a deliberate conspiracy. Sinn Fein also stressed parallels with the Jewish holocaust. Indeed in certain states, such as New Jersey, this view of the Famine was incorporated in the schools curriculum, yet another instance of the influence of Irish America. (In New York State, however, respected academics, with the backing of the School Authority, were able to publish a collection of documents intended to make possible a more detached discussion.)

When Mrs Thatcher came to power in 1979, Northern Ireland was seen by her as essentially a British problem. Within the Republic of Ireland, however, successive British attempts in the late 1970s and in the 1980s to crush nationalist unrest were viewed with growing disquiet. In 1984 the Irish government sponsored a New Ireland Forum which proposed three possible solutions to partition: the unification of Ireland, a federal or confederate Ireland or a form of joint sovereignty with Britain. At a meeting with Mrs Thatcher, the Irish Taoiseach Garrett Fitzgerald expounded these proposals, which also had the backing of leading Irish-American politicians. Mrs Thatcher, however, proved to be unsympathetic and at a press interview afterwards vehemently uttered the words, 'Out' 'Out' 'Out' in rejecting all three

proposals. Her confidence in her own decision-making proved to be ill-founded and in December 1984 the American President himself, needing the support of key senators and Congressmen, including the speaker 'Tip' O' Neill, pressed her to seek a compromise. Ronald Reagan told her in effect the public reaction to the outcome of the November summit was unfavourable, and he pressed her to make the 'central task of conciliation' a priority. This incident makes clear how much influence the Republic of Ireland enjoyed with the government of the United States. Mrs Thatcher did indeed concede reluctantly that there should be a joint consultation with the Irish Republic on issues concerning Northern Ireland. She also agreed to the setting up of a commission jointly chaired by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and an Irish Minister with a permanent secretariat housed near Belfast. This was an extraordinary change of course for the lady who boasted that she was 'not for turning'. It was indeed a shift of policy which led to the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1995 and to the Good Friday agreement of 1999. Within the Republic itself, the constitution was amended by a referendum, and its claim to sovereignty over the whole island was abandoned. This was a fundamental change of attitude.

By the end of the twentieth century a new political situation had arisen within 'the British Isles'. Two states, Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland, were now jointly involved in attempts to solve the problems of Northern Ireland. The two chief ministers Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern were in close and friendly contact. At the end of November 2004 agreement seemed to be possible between the Democratic Unionist party led by Ian Paisley and Sinn Fein led by Gerry Adams in the hope of restoring a power-sharing administration. Sinn Fein itself also had plans to take a greater part in the politics of the Irish Republic. The future course of events, as always, remains unknown but it seems likely that the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland will be much more closely associated than seemed possible earlier in the last century.

It remains to consider the question of immigration. Within the United Kingdom the census of 2001 revealed fundamental changes in its social and cultural structure. Immigration from the Caribbean, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and parts of Africa, which began in the years after the end of the Second World War, continued during the subsequent decades. The effect of this was to be seen in the south of England, particularly in parts of London, and in certain towns outside the metropolitan area such as Leicester. In Bradford, for example, the inhabitants of Pakistani origin amounted to 14.5 per cent of the population, the highest in the United Kingdom. In Blackburn and Darwin (Lancashire) the proportion was 8.7 per cent and in Wycombe (Middlesex) 6 per cent. Those of Indian background formed 16.5 per cent of the population of the London

suburb of Ealing and 21.9 per cent of Harrow. In Redbridge, another London suburb, Indians amounted to 14 per cent of the population and Pakistanis 6.2 per cent. In 2001 there were approximately half a million Black Caribbean people, half of whom were concentrated in thirteen districts, such as Tottenham. Unlike the Indian and Pakistani population, however, the Black Caribbean population had remained largely static in numerical terms since the 1950s and 1960s. The second largest ethnic group after 'white' is Indian with 1.1 million people claiming this ethnic identity, although in the 1960s there had also been large immigration from the Irish Republic, resulting in the creation of an Irish ethnic minority whose existence was largely unrecognised.

In the context of a total population of 60.7 million within the United Kingdom as a whole, post-war immigrants constitute a small proportion. However, their tendency to concentrate in certain areas for reasons connected with employment opportunities or in order to maintain contact with relatives has sometimes led to ethnic tensions. Racial segregation comparable to that found in the United States had occurred in such towns as Bradford or Oldham. Racial incidents also occur at football matches and Yorkshire Cricket Club has been accused of prejudice against non-white players, despite their Yorkshire accents. Racial prejudice also seems to exist in the police force and the army. There is also no doubt that the terrorist attacks in New York on 11 September 2001 and the continuing war in Iraq have had repercussions within the United Kingdom. Pakistanis and other groups associated with Islam complain of increasing prejudice against them. On the other hand the success of a young British Muslim boxer Amir Khan in the Olympic Games aroused general enthusiasm in his home town of Bolton and among the nation at large.

Of course prejudice against the influx of immigrant groups has been equally marked in other periods, notably in the case of Irish in the mid-nineteenth century and of Jews in its later decades. In Scotland, where there was a massive influx after the Famine, prejudice still survives. In 2004, for example, Martin O Neill, the manager of Glasgow Celtic football team, declared after an incident at the Glasgow Rangers match

I am not going to be blamed for 500 years of history that better people than me have been unable to solve. (*Sunday Times*, 28 November 2004)

In the face of the challenge posed by Mrs Thatcher, however, Presbyterians and Catholics made common cause, the key being the decision of the Labour party to join the Scottish Convention of 1990. The pace of change towards a more civic identity is slow, as is indicated in. T. M. Devine, ed., *Scotland's Shame: Bigotry and Sectarianism in Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2000) but it is nevertheless real.
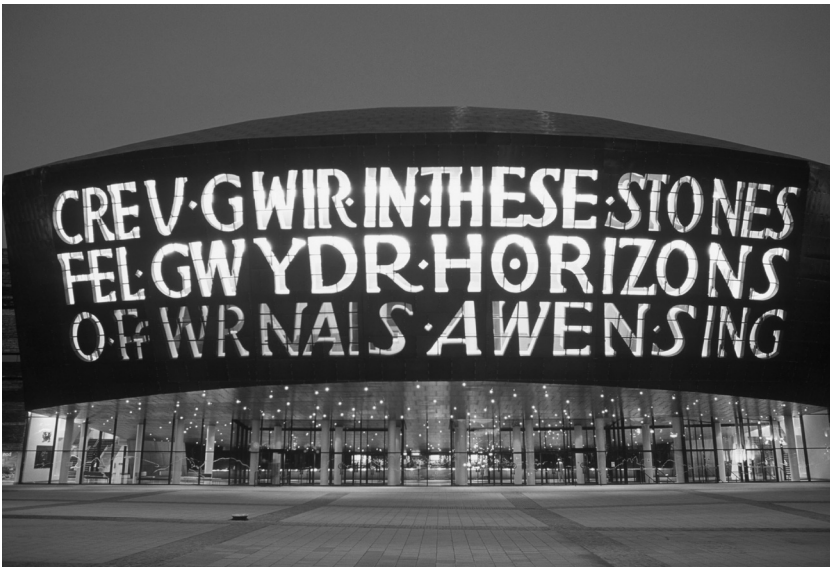
Figure 40. *Millennium Building, Cardiff*
In the post-war period nationalism was much weaker in Wales than
in Scotland and it was largely thanks to pressure from the Westminster
government that a measure of devolution was approved in a referendum.
The Welsh assembly now has a recognised place in Welsh political life
although Plaid Cymru, the Welsh nationalist party, is still very much in
a minority.

In Wales, the influence of the Free Churches, linked with the causes of
temperance and the Welsh language, once provided a general framework
of a Welsh national identity which was ethnic rather than civic. The prob-
lems which arose were illustrated by Richard Llewellyn in his best-selling
novel *How Green Was My Valley* (1939), in which ethnic tension within a
small village provides the theme of an important chapter.

Around each public house and all round the three rows of houses, where the
half breed Welsh, Irish and English were living . . . These people did the jobs
that colliers would never do, and they were allowed to live and breed because
the owners would not spend money on plant when their services were to be had
so much the cheaper. For a pittance they carried slag and muck, they acted as
scavengers, and as they worked so they lived. Even their children were put to work
at eight or nine years of age so that more money could come into the home. They
lived most of them only to drink. (Quoted in Dai Smith, *Wales! Wales?* (London,
1984, p. 114)

 Clearly, it was not easy for newcomers to assimilate into a Welsh society.

By the end of the twentieth century, the Free Churches and their allied cause, temperance, had lost ground. The cultural space was filled by a general revival of the Welsh language, which, since the passing of the Welsh Language Act of 1993, is taught in schools throughout Wales and is now generally accepted by all parties as the main civic symbol of nationhood. There has also been growing support for Plaid Cymru, the Welsh nationalist party which in 1997 achieved a swing of 35 per cent in the Rhondda Valley, an area once regarded as an impregnable Labour seat. In terms of national politics the great majority of votes in Wales was pro-Labour but Plaid Cymru now offered more of a challenge than it once did. Before the 1990s, Plaid Cymru's commitment to the Welsh language restricted its appeal to the Welsh-speaking heartland of north and west Wales. What changed the situation was the party's decision to move beyond its commitment to the language to more bread-and-butter issues. It was this 'new departure'which brought it success in the 1999 election for the newly created Welsh Assembly. The Rhondda Valley, hitherto a Labour stronghold, fell to Plaid Cymru along with other Labour seats, although in the general election of 2005 the seat was captured by an independent. Plaid Cymru, despite its advances, still remains a minority party in the Welsh Assembly and has only a handful of seats at Westminster.

In the Republic of Ireland, as we have seen, there has been a shift away from the ethno-religious nationalism of De Valera's day. In particular the decline of the influence of the Catholic hierarchy has led to the acceptance of a more 'liberal' approach to such matters as contraception and divorce. The prosperity of the Republic, however, has led to immigration from Europe and beyond, a phenomenon hitherto unknown. The result has been a degree of racialism but in general a civic-minded nationalism is in the ascendant within the Irish Republic. In contrast, the political and social scene in Northern Ireland is dominated by two rival ethno-cultural nationalisms, the Democratic Unionist party led by Ian Paisley and Sinn Fein led by Gerry Adams. Civic nationalism, represented by the Social Democratic and Labour party and the Alliance party, has now lost ground. At the present moment the only possible future for Northern Ireland lies in the hope of an agreement between the DUP and Sinn Fein, which in 2005 was unlikely. A 'civic' future for Northern Ireland seems only a remote possibility.

Of the nations making up the United Kingdom, England is of course by far the most important in terms of wealth and population (51 million compared to 5 million in Ireland, north and south, 5 million in Scotland and 3 million in Wales). Here the most significant development since the 1990s has been the rise of New Labour, which seems to draw more upon the secular liberalism of Lloyd George than the socialism of R. H.

Tawney. England has become *de facto* a civic society. Of course there is an established church in England, unlike the situation in Wales, Scotland and Ireland. In practice, however, the general mass of the population in England is unconcerned with religious observance, unlike elsewhere in the United Kingdom where attendance at church or chapel is still common.

Looking back over the past half century, it would seem that Britain's decision to abandon its imperial role was more decisive than any other single factor. Entry into the Common Market brought the United Kingdom into much closer contact than ever before with France and Germany, and forced it to compete for a voice in Europe with other powers. The British imperial past counted for less and less in the context of the present and the term 'British' no longer evoked visions of world empire but the sense of belonging to a middle-ranking European state. Slowly the British have had to think of themselves as European.

But who were 'the British'? As this book makes clear there is no simple answer to this question. The history of these islands, the so-called 'British Isles', has been bound up for a thousand years or more with the interaction of cultures in a process of change which shows no sign of coming to an end. 'British' history has thus long been a multi-ethnic history, whose character is suggested, somewhat inadequately, by the term 'Four Nations'. Post-war immigration has now added to the multi-ethnic character of British society particularly in the south-east and many official forms routinely ask for some indication of 'ethnic identity'.

This new world of multifarious identities has created a challenge for successive governments. It was most obvious in Northern Ireland where tensions between two rival communities led to a thirty-year-long civil war. As we have seen there has also been a resurgence of national feeling in both Scotland and Wales. English nationalism also exists although at present it seems to be largely a form of cultural nationalism, identifiable in such works as *England: An Elegy* (London, 2001) by the Tory intellectual Roger Scruton. The flag of St George is now displayed far more widely than was once the case and St George's Day also seems to be moving towards more general recognition on the lines of St Patrick's Day or St David's Day. The Conservative party may in due course come round to playing the card of English nationalism but under Mrs Thatcher its nationalism, though real enough, remained resolutely British, and Unionist. It was Labour which eventually and reluctantly came to embrace 'Home Rule' for Scotland and Wales, a decision which enabled them, at least so far, to outflank the nationalists.

In the context of 'Four Nations' history, England, and especially its prosperous south-east, has been the country most affected by Caribbean,

Indian, Pakistani and African immigration. In 1968 the conservative politician Enoch Powell attempted to introduce a racial dimension into politics when he declared 'in this country in fifteen or twenty years time the black man will have the whip hand over the white man' (R. Weight (London, 2002), p. 433). In later years he asked 'What's wrong with racism? Racism is the basis of nationality. Nations are upon the whole, united by identity with one another . . . and that's normally due to similarities which we regard as racial similarities' (*ibid.* p. 431). Such racial views linked to English nationalism have not as yet found a political outlet except in the British National Party (BNP). They pose a question, however, about the nature of future national identity in the new multi-ethnic England.

For some, such as Professor Parekh (in his *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (2000), Britishness implies a form of multiculturalism in which distinctiveness of Islamic, Hindu and other cultures will be recognised. For others, however, such as Brian Berry (in *Culture and Equality* (2001)), writing in the tradition of John Stuart Mill, the rights of individuals override the rights of cultures. Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer in successive Labour governments, made his own contribution to the debate in 2004 by stressing the importance of what he terms the 'British' idea of fair play – for individuals it would seem, rather than cultures. In contrast, for some Muslim groups, the right to practise their own 'sharia' law is a vital issue.

In European terms the situation within these islands clearly parallels that in Spain where Castile, Catalonia, Galicia and Euskardi (the Basques excluding ETA, the extreme Basque nationalist party) have agreed upon constitutional arrangements recognising their linguistic and legal differences. In the United Kingdom Welsh, Scots Gaelic and Irish have achieved legal recognition. In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, religious affiliation is still significant but, as we have seen England, despite its Protestant monarchy, is very much a secular society. It is also a society in which inter-racial marriage is now commonplace. At the level of popular culture all English football teams regularly include black players. It remains an open question, however, whether civic identity and ethno-religious tradition will reach a lasting accommodation in the United Kingdom as a whole.

The election of 2005 provided a test of the extent to which immigration and nationalism were key issues. In general it would seem that they did not play as important a role as some commentators expected. The Conservative party consciously played the 'immigration card' but to little effect. Nor did nationalist parties in Wales and Scotland make much of an impact. In Wales Plaid Cymru lost one of its four seats and

in Scotland the SNP was able to gain only one, to bring its total to four of the fifty-nine seats available. For the moment at least New Labour's policy of granting devolution seemed to have been successful in drawing the teeth of Welsh and Scottish nationalism. It was a different story in Northern Ireland, where two ethnic nationalist groupings, Sinn Fein and the Democratic Unionists, made headway at the expense of the centre, leaving the Good Friday Agreement in limbo. English nationalism was largely silent, voiced only by the United Kingdom Independence party (UKIP) and by the British National party (BNP). The question of UK membership of the European Union remained largely in abeyance during the election. Since public opinion in Wales and Scotland is pro-Europe it remains to be seen whether some future referendum on the European Constitution will be a crucial issue for an English- , as opposed to a British-wide, nationalism.

Englishness, as opposed to Britishness, remains very much a key issue in some Conservative circles. Calls for a return to narrative history are regularly made in the press, most recently in the conservative newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* (June 2005) which advocated the reprinting, a century after its first appearance, of a once-familiar volume *Our Island Story*. But the framework of such narratives is invariably Anglo-centric, linked to a succession of English monarchs, as the spoof history *1066 and All That* showed. What is not made clear is that England is merely part, albeit the wealthiest and most populous part, of a multi-national state – the United Kingdom. As is the case with Spain, the history of such a state must make room for multiple narratives, if it is to move beyond the purveying of myths – a comment which applies of course to all four nations, as well as to what is now perhaps a 'fifth nation', Islam.

Afterword

In 1931 Herbert Butterfield published a critical account of what he called the Whig interpretation of History, i.e. the abridgement of English history according to which freedom broadened down from precedent to precedent. In 1944, however, at the height of the Second World War he wrote *The Englishman and His History,* providing an eloquent defence of the Whig view.

> Some nations have had a broken and tragic past. Others are new or have only recently arisen after a long submergence. Some have been torn by a terrible breach between past and present – a breach which, though it happened long ago, they have never been able to heal and overcome. We in England have been fortunate and we must remember our good fortune, for we have actually drawn strength from the continuity of our history. (Butterfield, *The Englishman and His History* (Cambridge, 1944), p. vi)

Earlier he had spoken of such a view as associated with 'certain fallacies to which all history is liable'. Now he chose to celebrate it with 'a robust but regulated pride, observing the part which an interpretation of history has played in building up the centuries [*sic*] and creating the England that we know'. He saw Englishmen developing that 'whig interpretation which was never more vivid than in the great speeches of 1940'.

    The Englishman and His History itself is a remarkable illustration of the strength of a nationalist interpretation of English history, one which was dominant in both schools and universities. Its primary spokesman in the last half of the twentieth century was George Macaulay Trevelyan, Regius Professor of Modern History at the University of Cambridge, whose books were constantly reprinted. Trevelyan's *English Social History* (1944) was a best-seller at the height of the war. Butterfield may have called this type of approach 'The Whig Interpretation of History' but it was surely a prime example of English nationalism. Butterfield's own comments in *The Englishman and His History* shared Trevelyan's nationalism. The critic of nationalism bore witness to its power during a time of crisis.

In view of this it is all the more surprising that modern scholars have shown an extraordinary reluctance to consider the possibility that English nationalism existed. Thus Kenneth Morgan, an expert in the field, stated that England is a nation that had 'relatively little nationalist experience'. Anthony Smith, another authority on nationalism, argued that England experienced no fully developed nationalist movement.

The Whig interpretation, with its assumption of a peaceful progression in the spread of freedom from generation to generation, was not the only example of a nationalist view of English history. Throughout the nineteenth century belief in the importance of defending the Protestant constitution provided the basis of a rival interpretation, linked with the Tory party and the Church of England, and equally nationalist. As D.G. Paz has shown, Anglican Evangelicals believed, as against the Tractarians, that Protestantism has been the basis of the constitution since the reign of Edward VI and had been reaffirmed by the Glorious Revolution of 1688. According to this view Roman Catholicism was a prime enemy, 'subversive of order and of English institutions'. Not surprisingly the historical teaching at Oxford and Cambridge, both strongholds of the Established Church, provided support for this interpretation of English history.

English nationalism also informed the writing and teaching of such influential historians as James Anthony Froude and Edward A. Freeman, each of whom held the regius chair of history at Oxford. Froude regretted that the English and the Germans, 'the two great streams of the Teutonic race, though separated by but a narrow range of difference were unable to reach a common ground' (Hugh A. MacDougall, *Racial Myth in English History* (London, 1982), p. 98). Freeman wrote that Englishmen could boast that their nation was 'the one among the great nations of modern Europe . . . can claim for its potential institutions the most unbroken descent from the primitive Teutonic stock' (*ibid.*, p. 101). Sir John Seeley, in his book *The Expansion of England*, which remained in print well into the twentieth century, struck a somewhat different note but he too stressed the significance of 'blood and religion'.

However, as *The British Isles* has been at pains to point out, England itself was not a state but part of a multi-national conglomerate, from 1801 the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (from 1921 Northern Ireland). Butterfield throughout his book refers to 'we', to 'our history' and to 'England', but as we have seen England by itself cannot supply an appropriate framework for English. Celtic, Roman, Scandinavian and Norman-French influences also played their part and, as the work of Rees Davies, Nicolas Canny and others has shown, colonisation forms a key aspect of the intermingling history of these islands. Butterfield's 'we' is

quite misleading as a reference point. The 'we' of our history is multi-national and today is even more so, as 'we' enter a multi-cultural phase of 'our' history. Nationalism is thus not sufficient as a framework for English history. The same point may also be made about Ireland, Scotland and Wales, whose histories are intertwined with each other as with that of England.

In a Four Nations approach to the history of these islands it is impossible to ignore the influence of southern England and its key institutions, the monarchy, the Established Church, Oxford and Cambridge, the Inns of Court and not least parliament, upon the course of events within 'the British Isles'. But English nationalism inevitably provoked a reaction in the form of Welsh, Irish or Scottish nationalism. A major theme of Four Nations history must be the ways in which English racial and other myths evoked their equivalents in Ireland, Scotland and Wales and a top-down nationalism created a 'bottom-up' version outside the areas of English dominance.

A Four Nations framework thus makes it possible to introduce a comparative dimension not merely within 'the British Isles' but also within Europe. Recent work by Roger Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (1992), has proved most illuminating on the connection. Brubaker draws a distinction between the French assimilationist view of nationhood, linked to territory ('ius soli'), and the German view resting upon descent and 'ethno-cultural considerations' ('ius sanguinis'). With this in mind Seeley's stress upon 'blood and religion' and Freeman's appeal to 'the most unbroken descent from the primitive Teutonic stock' clearly place an important strand in English historiography within the ethno-cultural racial camp. The same point may be made about the 'Irish-Ireland' view of Irish history with its insistence upon the Gaelic Catholic element and its view of England as pagan and immoral. But, as is the case in France and Germany, there have always been rival, contested versions of what constituted nationhood, and in English historiography civic voices such as those of Lecky, Bury and Maitland and later Tawney made themselves heard. Nevertheless, today when calls for a truly national history are made, it is important to raise the question of what 'nation' and 'nationhood' has meant and might mean today in an ever more multi-ethnic society.

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